United Nations A/64/285

General Assembly

Distr.: General
17 August 2009

Original: English

Sixty-fourth session
Item 67 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Promotion and protection of the rights of the children: follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children

Follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In 2002, at its historic special session on children, the General Assembly approved "A world fit for children" (resolution S/27-2, annex), a set of commitments made to the world's children by Member States. In its resolution 58/282 the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to regularly present a report on progress achieved in implementing the Declaration and the Plan of Action.

Five years later, at a commemorative high-level plenary meeting of the Assembly held from 11 to 13 December 2007, Member States reaffirmed their commitment to the full implementation of the Declaration and the Plan of Action contained in the "World fit for children" document. Member States called for a "collective sense of urgency" in pursuing the goals set out by the world fit for children document. They held that "by giving high priority to the rights of children, to their survival and to their protection and development, we serve the best interest of all humanity".

The present report, using the best available data at the time of writing, assesses the steps taken in 2008 to achieve the world fit for children goals and highlights gaps as well as the strategic shifts necessary to meet the unmet goals. The year under review posed unique challenges from the combined effects of the fuel, food and finance crises, which reversed or slowed progress in achieving these goals. Member States had to stretch their already pressed resources to keep the world fit for children goals in focus. In the current and the remaining few years of what constitutes the world fit for children decade, both good policy and effective action will determine whether the reality for children changes for the better.

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The fulfilment of world fit for children goals is intrinsic not only to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals but also to the stability and future of the global community. As the analysis presented in the following pages shows, without greatly strengthened efforts to reduce disparities in children's access to their rights and opportunities, the Assembly's promise to children of a world that is fit for them will remain unfulfilled.

I. Introduction

1. At the historic special session of the General Assembly on children, which was held from 8 to 10 May 2002, delegations from 190 countries adopted the Declaration and Plan of Action set out in the document entitled "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2, annex). The outcome document committed Governments to a time-bound set of goals for children and young people, with a particular focus on (a) promoting healthy lives; (b) providing quality education; (c) protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and (d) combating HIV/AIDS.

2. The commemorative high-level plenary session of the General Assembly held from 11 to 13 December 2007 reaffirmed the commitment of Governments to the full implementation of the Declaration and the Plan of Action contained in the world fit for children document. The Member States welcomed the voices and the views of children and adolescents, heard at the commemorative plenary meeting, and agreed to strive to strengthen their participation in the declaration that affects them, in accordance with their age and maturity. The session noted that despite progress in a number of areas, many challenges persist.

3. At the start of 2008, it was sobering to know that by the year's end, more than 9 million children would succumb to early death; 75 million children would still be prevented from attending primary school and 182 million would not have access to secondary school; over 200 million would find their physical and intellectual growth impaired due to inadequate nutrition and lack of health care and early stimulation; children in four countries would still be at risk of being incapacitated by poliomyelitis; and 500,000 mothers would die during childbirth, leaving a gaping hole in the lives of the children they left behind.

4. The present report follows previous reports[1] and assesses the progress made during 2008 in achieving the world fit for children goals, many of which correspond with and complement the United Nations Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) and the Millennium Development Goals, almost all of which address and affect the rights of children.

5. The year 2008 was exceptionally challenging for the world as a whole, with the global financial crisis and economic slowdown affecting developed and developing regions alike. Added to the challenges was the near certainty that the crises would plunge millions more children into poverty and accentuate the already existing deprivations.

6. To fulfil their commitments to world fit for children goals, with renewed political will Governments worked to improve planning, policies and programmes and promote the shared responsibility of parents, families and society as a whole to promote the survival, protection and development of children. By giving high priority to the rights of children, as Governments noted at the commemorative session, the best interest of all humanity is served.

7. Children are often most vulnerable to adverse effects from environmental hazards. As the climate changes, environmental hazards are likely to increase and

[1] Annual reviews of progress were presented at the fifty-eighth session (A/58/333), the fifty-ninth session (A/59/274), the sixtieth session (A/60/207), the sixty-first session (A/61/270), the sixty-second session (A/62/259) and the sixty-third session (A/63/308) of the General Assembly.

children are likely to suffer disproportionately from these changes. Anticipated direct health consequences of climate change include: injury and death from extreme weather events and natural disasters; increases in climate-sensitive infectious and water-borne diseases; increases in air pollution-related illnesses; and heat-related, potentially fatal stress. Within all of these categories, children face increased vulnerabilities compared with other groups.

II. Progress in follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children

A. Planning for children

8. The highest priority was given to planning and formulating programmes for children to address barriers to accessing services, and expanding coverage rates for essential services. To address that process, up-to-date information and analysis were needed. Child-focused analysis by age, gender and other sources of disparity was undertaken in more than 60 programme countries. Specific evidence, highlighted by intensified advocacy, facilitated improved national plans, policies, and programmes. By the end of 2008, at least 85 programme countries had a national development plan, a poverty reduction strategy, or a transition plan addressing key challenges for children and women and for gender equality.

9. National and subnational planning was reoriented in support of decentralization, children's integration in subnational planning, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and strengthened local governance. Implementation strategies emphasized equity, efficiency, accessibility and accountability in the delivery of services, to produce results for children. Collaboration with municipalities on social inclusion and creating child-friendly cities received greater support. The fastest expansion took place in Latin America, where in 2008 around 20 per cent of the approximately 16,000 municipalities implemented integrated child-oriented approaches. In the Asia-Pacific region, where many countries are falling behind in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, United Nations entities set up a joint programme of support on improving local service delivery for the Millennium Development Goals in Asia.

10. Stronger evidence also influenced the rapid response to emerging needs. Specifically in response to the food security crisis, evidence gathered on nutritional deterioration in approximately 25 countries enabled Governments and partners to prioritize infant and young child feeding initiatives, and support targeted complementary feeding programmes for young children, along with the increased use of multiple micronutrient powders. Multi-micronutrient supplementation is now a standard intervention in emergencies.

11. In the context of economic crises in 2008, priority was given to reducing disparities and making programme interventions more effective and affordable. The School Fee Abolition Initiative, which began in 2005, gained wider support as did other interventions such as cash transfers, and free school meals, uniforms and textbooks. Recognizing the greater impact economic hardship had on girls' access to schools, the multi-agency partnership of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative focused on building evidence and providing technical support for greater mainstreaming of gender and girls' education in national education sector plans.

12. The designation of 2008 as the International Year of Sanitation put a much-needed global focus on promoting improved sanitation and hygiene. The first annual Global Handwashing Day helped to raise this simple and effective behavioural practice to global acceptance, with 200 million school children joining in. The impact of the International Year of Sanitation was seen in the higher priority given to sanitation within national planning instruments, increased resource allocations for sanitation, improved policy and legislation and community-led delivery mechanisms.

B. Promoting the processes of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

13. The year 2009 marked the twentieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, implementation of which has made an unmistakable impact on child rights. A whole generation of children and young people in all regions has grown up under its provisions. Child survival, development, protection and participation have been integral to the implementation of the Convention, and the reporting process has enabled Governments to be responsive as well as accountable for progress. In many countries, the Convention has strengthened or set in motion a process of social change in favour of children's best interests and encouraged Governments to adopt other protocols and agreements that bear closely on children's issues.

14. In 2008, lending further support to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the legislative reform and policy measures in many countries from all regions were energized. Governments continued to focus on legal, judicial and institutional reform to bring their systems more in line with internationally accepted norms of juvenile justice, to make the judicial process more child- and gender-sensitive and to develop norms and systems for non-institutional alternative care of children. Significant new legislation on domestic violence, corporal punishment, sexual violence, sexual exploitation and trafficking was enacted in a number of countries. To improve enforcement and monitoring, information-gathering mechanisms were created or strengthened. Within countries, in some cases actions were taken to address the rights of ethnic groups, minorities and indigenous people.

15. By the end of 2008, 130 countries had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and 124 had signed the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. There was also progress in the reporting and monitoring process of the Convention and in implementing the actions recommended by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Committee in 2009 adopted two new general comments, No. 11 and No. 12, on indigenous children and their rights under the Convention and the right of the child to be heard. The Human Rights Council held a full-day discussion on the rights of the child during the Council's tenth session, in March 2009.

16. Overall, although most Governments are moving in the required direction to ensure better compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and develop pro-child policies and systems, both enforcement and outreach need to be strengthened to ensure the rights of all children. The twentieth anniversary celebrations for the Convention on the Rights of the Child are focusing on

highlighting the challenges faced in ensuring the dignity of the child, providing the child with full possibilities for development and facilitating dialogue between adults and children in accordance with the participatory principles of the Convention relating to participation.

C. Collaboration and leveraging resources for children

17. Evidence from previous decades suggests that financial crises and economic slowdowns severely diminish the fiscal space of the public sector, creating pressure to reduce spending on basic social services, such as basic education and health care for children. Field reports for 2008 noted how the international crises made it more difficult to finance development programmes and poverty reduction efforts. Children were especially hard hit by the global crises and declining household incomes. Countries from all regions noted the effects of falling income in reduced food intake, nutrition, access to health care, school enrolment and attendance, and child protection. The crises also posed a heightened risk that households would resort to harmful coping strategies.

18. To prevent resource erosion for children's programmes, proactive advocacy was undertaken at strategic political, aid and sector forums, with tangible results. The health sector, for instance, achieved unprecedented leveraging of funds for certain national programmes. Working through the Roll Back Malaria initiative, the eighth round of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria mobilized over $2 billion for sub-Saharan Africa, in addition to the $100 million mobilized through the International Drug Purchase Facility (UNITAID). In support of polio eradication efforts, over $130 million was mobilized for supplementary immunization activities.

19. At the Doha Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, held in 2008, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) jointly convened a side event to stress the importance of sustaining public investments in children through stronger national commitments and international collaboration at times when the purchasing power of families was weakening. The deliberations, which indicated how children and women could be protected at times of crisis, were informed by the positive experiences of the Governments of China, Ecuador, Kenya and Morocco in making budgets work for children.

20. To buffer the economic shocks for families and children in poverty, many Governments prioritized social protection. In 38 countries, social protection initiatives have progressed under the strong leadership from Governments, with the support of international partners. Social protection needs-analyses led to piloting or expansion of cash transfer programmes and initiatives in dozens of countries, including in Africa and Asia. Eliminating service fees for health, birth registration and other services, in addition to the abolition of school fees, were some of the ways in which families were supported.

21. The onus to expand the fiscal space for children lies both with Governments and with development finance entities. In 2008, net disbursements of official development assistance increased by 10.2 per cent, to $119.8 billion. This was the highest dollar figure ever recorded and represented 0.3 per cent of developed

countries' combined gross national income.[2] Nevertheless, though the aid trends for 2008 were positive, they still fell short of commitments.

22. With increased vulnerability becoming the focus of global efforts in the shaky economic environment of 2008, the United Nations agencies, IMF, the World Bank and others worked together to advocate for continued support to the Millennium Development Goals, and through the Goals to promote fulfilment of the needs of children along with those of women. Dialogue with Governments addressed the need to focus on strategic partnerships for capacity development and the use of subnational data to guide investments that address disparities. In Africa, HelpAge International added its voice in support of the inclusion of social protection in the Social Policy Framework adopted by the 2008 ministerial meeting of the African Union. In Latin America and other regions, parliamentarians, ministries of finance and other advocates for children have developed plans to make national budgets child-friendly, with greater attention paid to social sectors.

23. Promoting children's rights has always rested on the collaborative efforts of Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and civil society. These partnerships became more critical to child rights efforts in the difficult context of 2008. The corporate sector globally and in several countries partnered with Governments to promote child rights. Under the tagline "Don't let child abuse travel", the World Tourism Organization partnered with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF, along with associations of the tourism industry and civil society organizations in the launching of the awareness-raising campaign for the protection of children against exploitation in travel and tourism. Many child rights groups joined with the media to advocate with parliamentarians and leaders on child rights. In the European Union, for instance, Eurochild and the European Children's Network (EURONET) jointly developed a manifesto, "Make children's rights a priority", targeted to candidates to the European Parliament. Other mechanisms, including child rights observatories in Latin America, continue to be used for advocacy with elected officials.

D. Monitoring progress

24. Supporting national and global monitoring efforts, the statistical tools of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, the Demographic and Health Survey and DevInfo saw much wider application. Along with DevInfo, which is now in use in 121 countries, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey and the Demographic and Health Survey are the most important tools used to collect child-centred data for tracking progress towards the indicators for the objectives of the world fit for children and the Millennium Development Goals and informing policy decisions. The monitoring and analysis of related indicators are supported by a range of United Nations agencies. By the end of 2008, about 50 reports for the third round of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey had been completed by participating countries, and 221 specific DevInfo databases had been published by Governments and various organizations.

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[2] *Millennium Development Goals Report 2009* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.09.I.12), p. 48.

25. Among newer initiatives is an effort by Johns Hopkins University to develop a user-friendly software package that will allow countries to estimate the impact of various child survival interventions on under-five mortality. Several African countries began to deploy Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys as a tool to monitor and close chronic gaps in public budget implementation, and to assess whether public expenditures aimed at supporting young children actually reach them. Instant messaging and other innovative communication technologies have given new dimensions to monitoring and responding to emergencies. Graduate students from Columbia University, for instance, jointly with UNICEF developed RapidSMS, a system that uses mobile phones and SMS text messages to collect data from field locations. The system, piloted in Malawi, has the potential to facilitate early warning, monitoring and timely response for children.

E. Participation and self-expression of children

26. The world today has the largest cohort of young people in history, with about 87 per cent of those between 15 and 24 years of age living in developing countries. They and their counterparts in developed countries are the major stakeholders in the world's future. The World Fit for Children Declaration at the 2007 commemorative high-level plenary meeting especially noted the potential of children to make a difference in achieving positive and sustainable development outcomes, and invited their participation in building a world fit for children.

27. In 2008, children and young people made their presence felt in key international forums. These included the Junior 8 Summit, a complementary event to the Group of Eight Summit, in Japan, the fourth Global Partners Forum on Children Affected by HIV and AIDS, in Ireland, the international conference marking the thirtieth anniversary of the Alma Ata Declaration on Primary Health Care, in Kazakhstan, and the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, in Brazil.

28. In about a quarter of programme countries, girls and boys have participated meaningfully in the most recent Convention on the Rights of the Child reporting process. More countries have set up sustained mechanisms for seeking youth views and involvement in national policy approaches. Where such mechanisms exist, they are enabling young people to influence issues that affect them. Common avenues for seeking views are youth forums, parliaments, consultations, opinion polls, national debates and media events, including child broadcast days. The Internet offers young people new ways to speak to each other and share their concerns. The Voices of Youth and SpeakAfrica are Internet sites for young people that provide opportunities to discuss key issues affecting children and feed into various forums. In addition to these initiatives, much more needs to be done to include excluded children and youth in the mainstream and alternative media.

III. Progress in the four major areas of "A world fit for children"

A. Promoting healthy lives

29. Promoting healthy lives for children, as indicated by world fit for children health goals, entails health-care provision from birth through adolescence and youth, involving strategies that ensure their survival, growth and development. Efforts towards these goals in 2008 were shaped by the challenges of accelerating efforts for promoting child survival goals, including Millennium Development Goal 4, in a context of greater nutritional vulnerability of children.

30. Although deaths in children under five in developing countries had declined by 28 per cent[3] between 1990 and 2007, the progress remained uneven. Africa still bore the greatest burden of child deaths (52 per cent) followed by 14 Asian countries where 41 per cent of all annual deaths among children under five years occur. About 51 per cent of the child deaths, attributed to just five diseases (pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria, measles and AIDS, with diarrhoea and pneumonia together accounting for about 36 per cent), were preventable, making this loss of young human life indefensible. Malnutrition as an underlying cause tends to further increase the vulnerability of children. Closely linked to healthy lives for children is support for nutrition for women and safe motherhood.

31. Routine immunization services, even with higher coverage, were unable to reach an estimated 24 million children below the age of one, and about 40 million pregnant women. Immunization coverage fell most in countries dealing with emergencies and economic crisis. The world fit for children target of 90 per cent coverage for immunization against diphtheria, polio and tetanus (DPT3) by 2010 (from the present 82 per cent in 2007) will require considerable acceleration of immunization. Compared to the 1.9 per cent annual rate of reduction in under-five child mortality achieved since 1990, achieving Goal 4 globally will require an average annual rate of reduction of 9.6 per cent between 2008 and 2015.

32. The combined effects of high basic food prices, reduced household income and greater world hunger worsened children's nutritional security.[4] Severely malnourished children in larger numbers were noted by many countries, in some cases with a dramatic rise in hospital admissions. Declining disposable income leading to limited food intake and health-care spending was also reported, with likely a greater impact on girls than boys due to chronic gender inequity. Undernutrition, a cause of more than one third of annual under-five deaths worldwide, remains a challenge. At the current average rate of reduction in underweight prevalence of 1.4 per cent, progress on child nutrition is insufficient to meet the 2015 target.[5]

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[3] In 2007, the global under-five mortality rate was 67 deaths per 1,000 live births, down from 93 in 1990. In the developing countries, the rate dropped from 103 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 74 in 2007. (*Millennium Development Goals Report 2009*, p. 24.)

[4] The prevalence of hunger in the developing regions rose from 16 per cent in 2006 to 17 per cent in 2008; 860 million people were living with hunger in 2008. (*Millennium Development Goals Report 2009*, p. 4.)

[5] *Millennium Development Goals Report 2009*, p. 4.

33. Maternal survival has shown the least progress among health indicators. Worldwide, there were an estimated 400 maternal deaths per 100,000 births in 2005, down from 430 deaths per 100,000 in 1990. Nearly 1,500 women die every day from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth, leaving infants and children more at risk of death and illness, denying them also the gains that accrue from maternal nurturing. About 4 in 10 of all births worldwide remain unassisted by skilled health personnel. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, with the lowest levels of skilled birth attendance, contribute most to maternal mortality. Rural and poor urban women, in particular, lack access to essential obstetrics and emergency care. Existing data suggest that to reach the Millennium Development Goals target, the global maternal mortality ratio would have to fall by an average of 5.5 per cent a year between 1990 and 2015, compared with the current average annual rate of reduction of less than 1 per cent. Vulnerability of adolescent girls, child marriage and sexual violence are among the key issues to be addressed as a priority in a number of regions. Without extraordinary measures, the world will fall far short of the target for maternal mortality reduction.

34. Nevertheless, there are reasons to remain optimistic. Among the positive factors is the continuing decline in deaths from measles (74 per cent reduction in 2007 from 2000) and its strongest reduction in sub-Saharan Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean countries. Increased efforts in 2008 achieved remarkable coverage levels in measles immunization in countries with some of the greatest remaining burden from the disease. The percentage of newborn children protected against tetanus at birth increased to 81 per cent globally. The expanded tetanus toxoid vaccination efforts reached over 37 million women of reproductive age in high-risk settings in 25 countries, and succeeded in eliminating maternal and neonatal tetanus in Bangladesh and in two states in India. A total of 138 countries had introduced the *Haemophilus influenzae* type B vaccine into their infant immunization schedules by the end of 2008, contributing to a promising potential of reduced deaths and illnesses. To cover the "last mile or inch" for eradicating polio, greater efforts, undertaken in the four remaining endemic countries (Afghanistan, India, Nigeria and Pakistan), led to unprecedented levels of community support for vaccination. Even in difficult geopolitical settings, some countries immunized nearly every child under five against polio, while others carried out unprecedented integrated health promotion campaigns.

35. Other high-impact cost-effective interventions, including vitamin A supplementation, de-worming, growth monitoring and distribution of insecticide-treated mosquito nets, continued to gain support in national health strategies. Considerably higher support to combat malaria had ripple effects on strengthening other health interventions. The renewed international funding in malaria is acting as a spearhead, helping to create demand for, increase and strengthen other health services, especially community case management of diarrhoea and pneumonia.

36. To accelerate progress in maternal and child survival and development, health promotion strategies focused on implementing the continuum of care approach, which ensures improved maternal and newborn child health care and delivery of health around a primary integrated health-care model. United Nations agencies and the World Bank, through a joint support programme set up in 2008, helped Governments to scale up efforts, especially in the 25 countries with the highest burden of maternal mortality. Governments in all regions lent increased support to implementing maternal and newborn child health care and the total health package

of services, and framed new policy guidelines to improve maternal and newborn child health care and strengthen provisions for mothers, newborns and children. Several countries in Africa developed costing of national health plans and medium-term expenditure frameworks for reaching the health-related world fit for children goals and Millennium Development Goals,[6] and 11 Asian countries developed investment plans to enable the integration of essential high-impact interventions into national plans and budgets. Country compacts were put in place to address the practical bottlenecks to strengthening health systems overall and to reducing disparities in coverage.

37. Nutrition promotion efforts and resources focused on rapid expansion of programmes to treat severe acute malnutrition in the community, intensifying protection and promotion of breastfeeding, strengthening complementary feeding programmes through increased use of multi-micronutrient powders, increased vitamin A supplementation and expanded coverage of salt iodization. Governments in 42 countries drafted or finalized guidelines and formulated national action plans to increase and integrate treatment of severe acute malnutrition within the regular health system. Targeted complementary feeding programmes also yielded results in terms of greater knowledge and practice of appropriate breastfeeding and complementary feeding. The use of therapeutic foods, including Plumpy'nut, grew globally by 63 per cent over 2007.

38. Conveying information on critical care practices to communities is vital to child survival and development. National programmes that promote good parenting and have specific strategies to reach marginalized children and families are now in place in 61 countries, and national development plans include targets for scaling up improved family and community care practices in 71 countries. This is a small increase over 2007. Much more effort is required to significantly enlarge the roles, responsibilities and ownership of communities and families in health, nutrition and sanitation promotion. In reaching out to the community, a key role continues to be played by Child Health Days, which were held in 34 countries in 2008 and by health campaigns undertaken in another 24 countries.

39. Child survival and development continued to be hampered in 2008 by poor progress in water, sanitation and hygiene. The world is on track for the Millennium Development Goals[7] water target and off track for the Millennium Development Goals sanitation target. An estimated 884 million people live without access to improved drinking water and about 2.5 billion people without improved sanitation facilities. Africa is the region most off-track for both the water and sanitation targets, while South Asia accounts for the majority of people without sanitation.

40. In 2008 there was heightened support for the water, sanitation and hygiene sector. In all, 99 countries incorporated explicit measures for achieving the water, sanitation and hygiene targets into their national development plans. New national water, sanitation and hygiene policies were adopted, in some cases as an integral

[6] The application of Marginal Budgeting for Bottlenecks, a tool for evidence-based planning, costing and budgeting expanded in Africa under the inter-agency framework of Harmonization for Health in Africa, contributing to improving the quality of sectoral strategies for Millennium Development Goals.

[7] Millennium Development Goals require halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015 (compared to 1990), and the world fit for children target requires a one-third reduction by 2010.

part of a new national poverty reduction strategy paper. Nearly 40 per cent of programme countries now have a national communication programme that promotes hand-washing with soap, while 43 per cent of countries have a medium-term expenditure framework (or equivalent) that includes dedicated budget lines for sanitation and hygiene.

41. The majority of schools in developing countries do not have adequate water, sanitation and washing facilities. This lack affects the health of children and contributes to low school attendance and educational performance levels, especially for girls. Initiatives for water, sanitation and hygiene in schools drew much greater support in 2008, with 88 countries implementing activities through the Child-Friendly Schools initiative. Although water, sanitation and hygiene in schools is not a Millennium Development Goal target, stakeholders have prioritized programmes to address it.

42. Children's health received some unusual setbacks from the events in 2008 that called for an important emergency response. Cluster approaches shaped health and nutrition interventions in 70 emergency-affected countries, and water, sanitation and hygiene interventions in 40 countries. The bulk of response efforts and resources were geared to preventing the outbreak of cholera and nutritional deterioration, provision of safe water and sanitation and hygiene promotion.

B. Providing quality education

43. The Education for All initiative, Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3, and world fit for children goals 2, 3 and 4, all share a common vision of ensuring quality primary and secondary education for all children. Past efforts resulted in the school enrolment of 85 per cent of children of primary-school age, but 75 million children are still not enrolled. Countries in sub-Saharan Africa account for 52 per cent of out-of-school children. Less than 63 per cent of pupils reach the last grade of primary school in 17 sub-Saharan African countries and 78 per cent reach the last grade in half the countries of South and West Asia. There continues to be a shortage of teachers: an estimated 18 million additional primary school teachers are needed to meet the 2015 goals. Though gender disparities declined in favour of girls,[8] the parity achieved was mainly at the primary level. Only 37 per cent of countries achieved parity at the secondary level, compared with 63 per cent at the primary level. Gender enrolment gaps remain large across much of South Asia and Africa. Adult illiteracy remains a challenge, with an estimated 800 million adults, or 1 in 5, unable to read. Illiteracy is worse for women (1 in 4), whose level of literacy strongly influences children's education and contributes to girls' empowerment.

44. Access, equity and quality continue to be the keys to advancement in the field of education. Access to primary school for the remaining 15 per cent of children continues to be hampered by persistent disparities and diverse forms of exclusion and discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, rural or urban location, income

[8] In 2006, of the 176 countries with data, 59 had achieved gender parity in both primary and secondary education — 20 countries more than in 1999. At the primary level, about two thirds of countries had achieved parity. However, more than half the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia and the Arab States had not reached the target (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2009*, summary).

differentiation and social status. Girls face double risks owing to factors such as parental preference for sons, concerns for the girls' security, and in some countries physical and sexual attacks on girls in and around school. Geopolitical conflict and other emergencies continued to disrupt children's education. Adding to the chronic barriers, fragile economies and weakened household incomes in 2008 posed further risk of children either not enrolling or dropping out. The Committee on the Rights of the Child devoted its 2008 day of general discussion in September 2008 to articles 28 and 29 of the Convention dealing with the right to education, focusing upon the education of children in emergency situations and made specific recommendations to further strengthen efforts to make education a priority and an integral component of humanitarian relief and response in emergency situations.

45. With affordability a key barrier to education access, more Governments lent support to free public primary education. The successful Latin American approach, with cash transfers made conditional on school attendance and health visits, guided several initiatives. Mexico's well-known *Oportunidades* programme, one of the largest based on cash transfer, is now being applied on a pilot basis in other settings, including in New York.[9]

46. To reduce disparity in access, more countries set up focused interventions for girls' inclusion, which contributed to impressive increases in enrolment and completion rates for girls in several countries in Africa and South Asia. Challenges related to violence in and around schools, especially against girls, continue to be an impediment in several countries. Partnerships for the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative in 41 countries continued to promote educational equity for girls. Education planning is becoming more gender-inclusive. The number of national education plans in programme countries that include measures to reduce gender disparities increased from 58 in 2005 to 87 in 2008. For disadvantaged and underserved children, greater support was evident, with 110 programme countries in 2008 incorporating measures to reduce disparities due to poverty, ethnicity and disability in their education plans.

47. Interventions promoting quality education, including School Readiness and Child-Friendly Schools, were scaled up to cover more countries and schools. The Child-Friendly Schools approach, incorporating interventions in safe water supply and sanitation, was particularly effective in increasing school enrolment and attendance.

48. Pre-primary or early childhood education has progressed slowly. Pre-primary gross enrolment ratios in 2006 averaged 79 per cent in developed countries and 36 per cent in developing countries, and were as low as 14 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa. Efforts in early childhood development by Governments assisted by partners have led to some positive outcomes: 50 countries now have a national policy on universal school readiness and some have moved ahead with setting national standards (69 countries) and assessment tools (45 programmes) for monitoring school readiness.

49. Education at the secondary level is also characterized by slower expansion and is unable to meet the growing demand. In 2008, 185 million children of secondary school age were not enrolled at secondary level. Inequalities at the secondary school level affected rural and poor children the most, and boys more than girls in some

[9] *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2009.*

countries in East Asia and Latin America. Intensified efforts to encourage both boys and girls to complete primary schooling and progress to secondary education are urgently required to prepare the next generation of productive adults. For bridging this huge gap between primary and secondary education, catch-up and second-chance programmes are required on a much larger scale. About 40 per cent of the 75 million children who were not in primary school in 2008 lived in conflict-affected areas, pointing to the immense responsibility and potential to step up enrolment.

C. Protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence

50. There was considerable progress in global support for children's rights. In addition to ratifications related to the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child referred to earlier, 169 States ratified ILO Convention No. 182 (1999) concerning the prohibition of and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour; 79 States endorsed the Paris Principles and Paris Commitments;[10] and 96 States have signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which supports humanitarian disarmament, including the ban of landmines and other indiscriminate, illicit weapons.

51. In November 2008, at the third World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, 137 Governments (and others, including adolescents) committed to the time-bound goals of the Rio Declaration and Action Plan. The International Conference of Labour Statisticians in December 2008 approved the inclusion of household chores in the statistical definition of child labour, vastly increasing the potential to redress the absence of girls in child labour monitoring and policies. The Secretary-General issued a guidance note (September 2008) on the United Nations approach to justice for children, requiring all United Nations entities to take children into account in rule of law initiatives. This has major potential for influencing the status of children's rights in Member States and leading to a comprehensive justice for children approach. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its concluding observations, started to systematically recommend that State parties take all necessary measures to implement the recommendations of the Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children. In May 2009 the Special Representative on Violence against Children was appointed to "act as a high-profile and independent global advocate to promote the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children".

52. In support of the above, efforts to incorporate child protection components in rule of law initiatives were undertaken in 49 or more countries. Child-sensitive and gender-appropriate police and court procedures and institutions were more evident. Even in conflict-affected areas, specialized units were established by Governments to respond to violence and sexual exploitation.

53. Expanded efforts were made to reduce the number of children deprived of liberty through diversion from judicial proceedings. Mediation, community service, probation, life skills programmes, counselling or family group conferencing were

[10] The Paris Commitments, consistent with existing international legal standards and addressed to States, define measures to protect children involved in hostilities and help them reintegrate into their families and communities, while the complementary Paris Principles, addressed to practitioners, provide detailed programme guidance.

put in place as viable and desirable alternatives to incarceration and institutionalization. Alternative care was promoted by more than 50 programme countries, often providing an entry point for strengthening the overall child protection system.

54. To promote child protection and gender equity, Governments in 56 programme countries implemented gender-sensitive programmes addressing social conventions and norms that contribute to violence, exploitation and abuse. A total of 46 countries incorporated child protection related to emergency preparedness and response into national planning mechanisms, and 30 other countries were in the process of doing so. Some 55 countries have included sex-disaggregated data on child protection indicators in their most recent national report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. In addition, 35 programme countries have started conducting gender analysis of the key child protection indicators.

55. Social protection provisions were initiated or strengthened in 38 programme countries in 2008. Efforts to reach orphaned children also picked up momentum but remained far short of need. Only 10 per cent of the estimated 133 million orphans receive public support or care services within their communities. In response to the economic crisis, greater attention was given to migrant children being adversely affected by the increased job losses and reduced remittances among migrant families. There are multiplier effects in linking child protection to the other three areas of world fit for children-related work. Accordingly, coordination with the education and health sectors improved in several countries in Latin America, resulting in improved prevention and detection of cases of violence, exploitation and abuse against children in these sectors.

56. National and transnational interventions regarding exploitative practices undertaken in the Latin America and Africa regions helped to deal with victims and perpetrators in a more coordinated way, enabling improved tracking and repatriation of children, and ensuring procedures more respectful of child rights and dignity. Child rights advocates in Europe are focusing on creating a broader legal framework for addressing child trafficking and a new coalition of police, Internet providers, credit card companies and non-governmental organizations to tackle the growing flow of child pornography distributed online.

57. The changing nature of armed conflict and the proliferation of armed groups involving a variety of non-State actors is a growing concern. In 2006 it was estimated that there were 250,000 unlawfully recruited children associated with armed forces and armed groups, and millions more affected by the impact of conflict. Politically, this challenge is addressed through United Nations accountability mechanisms and through the ministerial Follow-up Forum to the Paris Principles. These efforts have led to some success in the development of action plans and the release of children from armed groups in Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sri Lanka and the Sudan and most recently, in commitments for the release of children by an armed group in the Philippines. Efforts were made to reintegrate children through child disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes in 13 countries.

58. Adopting a systemic social transformation approach is proving effective in addressing customary violence against children and women. Several countries in Africa achieved significant progress in 2008 in tackling female genital mutilation/cutting by changing policies and legal frameworks, training health

workers and mobilizing entire communities and influential leaders as partners for social change. Launched in 2008, a joint programme of the United Nations Population Fund and UNICEF on Accelerated abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting within a generation (2008-2012) is bringing stakeholders together to achieve the goal.

59. Child marriage and child labour continue to defy solution in a number of countries. The world fit for children goal is to end early and forced marriage by 2010. The goal will not be achieved unless countries enact and strictly enforce laws regulating the minimum age at marriage and use targeted community mobilization and auditing, especially among high-risk communities and population groups. The same applies to child labour. Currently more than 200 million children (100 million of them girls) are labourers, doing work that is damaging to their mental, physical and emotional development. Sub-Saharan Africa, with 26.4 per cent of its children at work, has the highest child work ratio in the world. In 90 countries, Governments along with ILO and global and national partners, are working to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2016, but the progress towards the goal is slow. Countries have limited capacity to protect children against all forms of abuse, including child labour.

60. Some promising efforts were made in 2008, such as those addressing child labour in the cotton, cocoa or other industries. Success in addressing child labour is associated with improved corporate social responsibility initiatives and steady, constructive interface with trade unions, small-scale business owners and employers, community opinion makers, youth leaders and public interest groups. Conditional cash transfers and other social protection provisions that strengthen family earnings have been effective in averting child labour and educational exclusion of children, but they are so far inadequate in relation to need. According to ILO, the economic downturn is reversing some of the gains made earlier in lowering child labour incidence. Registration at birth, which has yet to become free and universal, remains indispensable to tackling early marriage, child labour and the violation of other entitlements of children.

61. A welcome development in the global response is greater recognition of the direct link between child labour and youth employment. Programmes that reflect this continuum between child labour prohibition and youth employment promotion measures will help to achieve the double goal of protecting children's right not to work, while ensuring youths' right to work.

D. Combating HIV/AIDS

62. In 2008, which marked the twentieth year of the inception of World AIDS Day, children younger than 15 years of age constituted about 14 per cent of new global HIV infections, 14 per cent of AIDS deaths and 6 per cent of the people living with HIV. About 90 per cent of the estimated 2.1 million children living with HIV were in sub-Saharan Africa. An estimated 15 million children across the world had lost one or both parents to AIDS and large numbers experienced or risked abandonment, social isolation and economic destitution.

63. Women accounted for more than 60 per cent of all infections in sub-Saharan Africa compared with about 50 per cent in the world as a whole. Young women (15-24 years) in sub-Saharan Africa remained particularly vulnerable to infection

partly due to early marriage, or to early or forced sexual initiation. More than 90 per cent of children who are HIV positive were infected through their mothers.

64. Ongoing efforts have resulted in higher coverage levels and there are signs of the epidemic stabilizing in terms of fewer new infections. In 2007, the number of people newly infected declined for the first time, from an estimated 3.0 million to 2.7 million. An estimated 1.5 million of the 115 million births per year in low- and middle-income countries are to mothers living with HIV. Just 18 per cent of pregnant women in these countries were tested for HIV. Of pregnant women living with HIV, only 12 per cent had access to antiretroviral treatment for their own health (2007). Children on treatment represent only a small proportion of those who need it.

65. The global response to AIDS, supported by the alliance of co-sponsors of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), is focused on expanded coverage of the four-pronged strategy of prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV: primary prevention of infection among adolescents and young people; prevention of unintended pregnancies among women infected with HIV; prevention of HIV transmission from an infected mother to her child, including the provision of paediatric treatment; and protection and support for children and families affected by HIV and AIDS. Emphasis is also placed on improved knowledge of the epidemiology of HIV, on the diversity of children affected by it, and on geographic, social and cultural settings in which it occurs. Pairing "Know your epidemic" with "Know your child" approaches is helping to improve understanding about how the epidemic spreads, which children are most vulnerable and which means of communication is most effective to reach children.

66. Increased advocacy, communication and resource mobilization efforts undertaken in 2008 are mobilizing support for the scale-up of early infant HIV diagnosis, leading to increased access by children in many countries. The key barrier to paediatric care is the limited capacity of service providers to diagnose children early enough and to ensure access to life-saving drugs. Early infant diagnosis provided during prevention of mother-to-child transmission interventions has only 8 per cent coverage globally. The cotrimoxazole preventive therapy, a cost-effective, critical intervention, reaches only 4 per cent of HIV-exposed children. On the other hand, where interventions have increased to near universal coverage (with prevention of mother-to-child transmission reaching over 75 per cent), as in Argentina, Botswana, Georgia and the Russian Federation, the outcomes are inspiring.

67. The broader, integrated approach is also evident in medical and health-care interventions. To expand coverage, the focus increasingly is on integrating prevention of mother-to-child transmission and paediatric AIDS treatment into maternal, newborn and child health and primary health-care systems. In Central Asian countries that already have strong maternal and newborn child health-care systems, prevention of mother-to-child transmission and paediatric HIV care and treatment were fully integrated into maternal and newborn child heath care in 2008. In countries with limited access to antenatal care facilities, as in South Asia, the focus is increasingly on high-risk groups. In such difficult settings, a high priority is primary prevention for women of childbearing age.

68. Comprehensive knowledge among youth (15-24 years) about HIV and how to avoid transmission was estimated at about 30 per cent among males and 19 per cent

among females in developing countries.[11] Promoting HIV knowledge and services for young people is now a component of the national HIV strategic plans of 22 countries in West and Central Africa. Furthermore, 79 countries have integrated HIV and AIDS education into the national curriculum at the secondary level. Several countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States region have included interventions for most-at-risk adolescents as part of their national AIDS strategies and operational plans. Latin American and Caribbean countries issued an historic declaration at the 2008 First Meeting of Ministers of Health and Education to Stop HIV in Latin America and the Caribbean, pledging support to multisectoral strategies to provide comprehensive sex education as part of school curricula, as well as activities and services to promote sexual health. Further efforts for education in HIV prevention will need to focus on the large numbers of out-of-school children and adolescents and on other excluded children and youth.

69. Greater focus in prevention and education is also being given to reaching young girls aged 15-17 who show lower prevalence levels than women in their early twenties. Girls and women are facing gender-based violence, including rape, by family members as well as acquaintances and strangers. This may be exacerbated in situations of armed conflict. Boys may also face sexual and other forms of violence in conflict and normal settings. The potential for young and adult men to play an active role in cutting the cycle of violence and in preventing transmission of HIV needs to be used. There is also a need for accelerated action to tackle substance use, which poses a growing risk of HIV infection in many countries — developed and developing — where AIDS is not otherwise widespread.

70. For an effective global response to HIV, the linked efforts of Governments and development partners continue to be critical. Through leveraging resources and mutual strengths and developing joint plans and programmes, many partners are playing a key role. These include UNAIDS; the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (United States of America); the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; the William J. Clinton Foundation; and the International Drug Purchase Facility Committee (UNITAID). Greater harmonization in monitoring progress on HIV efforts is being achieved through the UNAIDS Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group.

IV. The way forward

71. Climate change will have profound implications for the survival, development, protection and participation of children and of future generations. Food availability could be reduced as land and ocean food productivity patterns shift and species diversity declines. Water availability will change and become too abundant in some regions and much reduced in others. Some coastal populations will be forced to move because of the rising sea level. Large-scale, forced migrations driven by abrupt climate change and natural disasters are also possible. Sustainable solutions will have to be developed, focused on addressing vulnerabilities and promoting resilience, not least among children, while ensuring that future generations will be able to meet children's needs.

[11] United Nations Children's Fund, *The State of the World's Children*, 2009.

72. Accelerating interventions to reduce maternal and child mortality and improving equity in coverage of services will remain key priorities for promoting healthy lives. Progress is hampered by the fragile capacity of many health systems, lack of skilled care for women and children at critical times, as well as nutritional insecurity. Improved maternal and newborn health, community case management of common illnesses, malaria prevention and treatment, preventing malnutrition and securing clean water and safe sanitation will be critical areas of focus. The greater integration of health systems with disease control campaigns is also required.

73. Gender equality and equal access for excluded children will remain priority goals in education. In addition to the promotion of free education and enhanced social protection, the quality of education will have to be addressed to motivate children to come to school and to ensure their continued learning. Higher investment in basic education and in integrating out-of-school children will also be major priorities. Further efforts are needed to strengthen learning among children in emergency, reconstruction and post-emergency situations.

74. Considerable challenges remain in protecting children against all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse. Strengthening parenting skills and existing systems to prevent and tackle crimes against children, making justice and social protection systems more respectful of children's dignity and best interests will remain key areas of focus. The improvement of health systems remains critical to scaling up prevention of mother-to-child transmission and providing paediatric HIV care. Improved detection, reporting and follow-up will be necessary to safeguard the lives of women and children living with HIV.

75. As part of strategies to bridge the wide gaps that persist in access to basic services, there is a need to support families through improved safety nets and social protection. International support for building the key capacities of national partners for achieving the international goals for children and fulfilling their rights, will continue to be major priorities for the international community in the coming years.

United Nations A/64/286

General Assembly

Distr.: General
12 August 2009

Original: English

Sixty-fourth session
Item 98 of the provisional agenda*
Review of the implementation of the recommendations and decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth special session

Work of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters held its fifty-first and fifty-second sessions, respectively, in New York from 18 to 20 February 2009 and in Geneva from 1 to 3 July 2009. As part of the improvements made in its method of work since 2008, the Board focused its deliberations during both sessions on two substantive agenda items: (a) cyberwarfare and its impact on international security and (b) ways to strengthen the field of verification, including the role of the United Nations. At its February session, the Board agreed to consider an additional substantive agenda item entitled "Conceptual issues leading up to the 2010 NPT Review Conference", in view of ongoing developments in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation prior to the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to be held in May 2010.

Regarding the issue of cyberwarfare and its impact on international security, the Board recommended that the Secretary-General raise the awareness of Governments and the general public of the emerging risks and threats related to cyberwarfare, whenever possible.

* A/64/150.

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With regard to the topic of ways to strengthen the field of verification, including the role of the United Nations, the Board suggested that the Secretary-General encourage Member States to provide feedback on all studies that have been done in the field of verification for lessons learned purposes and for a better understanding that a "one-size-fits-all" approach in the field of verification could be counterproductive. The Board also felt that although the United Nations had primary responsibility in dealing with international peace and security issues, it could consider a role for regional organizations in verification matters.

Following consideration at its July session of an additional item on conceptual issues leading up to the 2010 Review Conference, the Board recommended that the Secretary-General continue to provide his strong support for the positive political momentum in the field of bilateral and multilateral nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation through effective diplomatic channels, as well as through public statements. The Board also proposed that the Secretary-General encourage States to sign the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) additional protocols and to implement as many confidence-building measures as possible. The Board also expressed support for the five-point plan of the Secretary-General to revitalize nuclear disarmament efforts and suggested that the Secretary-General might consider advancing an updated version of his proposals in view of new developments since October 2008.

As the Board of Trustees for the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the Board adopted the Institute's 2009 programme and budget and approved, for submission to the General Assembly, the report of the Director of the Institute on its activities from August 2008 to July 2009, as well as the proposed programme of work and budget for 2009 and 2010. The Board also recommended the granting of a continuing subvention for the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research from the United Nations regular budget for the biennium 2010-2011.

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters held its fifty-first and fifty-second sessions, respectively, in New York from 18 to 20 February 2009 and in Geneva from 1 to 3 July 2009. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 38/183 O. The report of the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), approved by the Advisory Board serving as its Board of Trustees, has been submitted in a separate document (A/64/261).

2. Carolina Hernandez of the Philippines chaired the two sessions of the Board in 2009.

3. The present report summarizes the Board's deliberations during the two sessions and the specific recommendations it conveyed to the Secretary-General.

II. Substantive discussions and recommendations

A. Cyberwarfare and its impact on international security

4. The Board exchanged views on issues of cyberwarfare and its impact on international security. As a follow-up to discussions it had on emerging weapons technologies during the past three sessions, the Board exchanged views on the emerging risks and threats related to cyberwarfare.

5. At its fifty-first session, the Board had before it a food-for-thought paper on the agenda item prepared by the Director of UNIDIR, Theresa Hitchens.

6. At the same session, the Board also heard a presentation by an expert, James Andrew Lewis, Senior Fellow and Program Director at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, on the issue of cyberwarfare and security.

7. The Board's deliberations on the topic during its two sessions clearly showed that the issue of cyberwarfare remained a complex and complicated issue that had a significant impact on both national and international security, as well as on human security, in particular in view of the potentially destabilizing impact that cyberwarfare may have on civilian society.

8. It was stated that, while qualitatively different from biological or chemical weapons, in particular in the area of dual use, cyberwarfare shared similarities with them. Views were expressed on how the issue could be effectively addressed in terms of preventive measures and possible regulations at various levels — national, regional and international — while taking into account all relevant aspects of national and human security, as well as civil liberties.

9. Questions were asked regarding whether cyberwarfare was a disarmament/arms control issue or a law enforcement issue. Some members were of the view that cyberwarfare should be addressed within the context of arms control rather than disarmament. The need to prevent the use of information technology for hostile purposes and the need to prevent another arms race spiral was also emphasized.

10. In connection with the potentially destabilizing impact that cyberattacks could have on civilian society, there was a shared view of the difficulties in reaching a clear delineation between cyberwarfare and cyberattacks. Comments were made on the need to distinguish between hostile and non-hostile actors in cyberspace. Nonetheless, several members stressed that Governments should not infringe upon civil liberties in their efforts to prevent cyberattacks.

11. Opinions were expressed over the need for the creation of social norms in cyberspace due to rapid advances in the field of information technology. However, questions were posed on whether it would be possible to establish such norms due to the considerable gap in information technology capabilities among States.

12. Given the complex nature of the topic, the Board agreed that more detailed work and studies were required before the matter could be considered in the context of arms control and disarmament. In particular, ideas were put forward to suggest that UNIDIR could conduct a comprehensive study on cyberwarfare/cybersecurity and its impact on international security.

13. Strong support was also expressed over the establishment by the Secretary-General of the group of governmental experts on information security, which will start its work during the latter part of 2009. It was believed that such a group would be able to provide better technical expertise on the issue. It was also suggested that the group could consider some of the ideas and suggestions made by the Board for consideration in its work. Several members also recommended that UNIDIR should contribute to the work of the group.

Recommendation

The Board made the following recommendation:

14. **The Secretary-General should raise the awareness of Governments and the general public of the emerging risks/threats related to cyberwarfare, whenever possible.**

B. Ways to strengthen the field of verification, including the role of the United Nations

15. The Board discussed its second agenda item on ways to strengthen the field of verification, including the role of the United Nations during its two sessions in 2009.

16. At its fifty-first session, three members, Dewi Anwar, Kate Dewes and Carlo Trezza, presented food-for-thought papers on the topic.

17. The Board had an in-depth exchange of views on the topic of verification, with particular emphasis on nuclear verification issues. Members stressed that in order for verification processes to be successful there was a requirement for such processes to be perceived as independent by all countries. It was also stressed that in order to be seen as legitimate, multilateral verification processes should be undertaken by independent experts, taking into account the due security interests of the States concerned, and in accordance with a set of internationally accepted global norms on verification.

18. Many members concurred that multilateral verification was complex, costly and challenging to enforce. Views were expressed that verification was necessary in order to sustain arms control regimes and that verification must be accompanied by penalties for violations, as well as enforcement capacities. Some members stressed that verification mechanisms were worthless if there were no ways to effectively act against potential violators. One member stated that while national legislation was perhaps a first level of enforcement, there was a need to recognize that State parties have a diversity of domestic contexts, some of which would not support national legislation on the matter.

19. Several members expressed the view that verification mechanisms must be launched within the framework of multilateral agreements, while others stressed that bilateral agreements were also important. Some members commented that while multilateral approaches should be the objective, there could also be merit in having regional organizations play important roles.

20. Other related views included the need for verification systems to be devised with specific aims according to international agreements and types of weapon systems; for verification to provide sufficient assurance that a State's security would not be undermined; and for the systems to be functional and subordinate to the real security needs of States.

21. Members emphasized the importance of taking into account the difference between making a deliberate choice for non-compliance and the lack of capability for compliance by a State. Some members stressed the necessity of making a clear distinction between the unwillingness and the lack of capability of State parties to fulfil their commitments under various arms control regimes.

22. It was stated that a fundamentally changed world had created many actors conducting activities within the national territories of some States, in particular States unable to exercise full control over their territories. It was therefore stressed that there was a need to understand and learn how to tackle such situations. Several members also stressed that verification needed to be extended to the conventional weapons often used by transnational criminal organizations and in intra-State conflicts. A view was expressed on the need to tackle the verification of the illicit trafficking of conventional weapons by non-State actors. However, a question was raised about the feasibility of that verification, given the illicit nature of such trafficking.

23. During both sessions, several members emphasised the importance of societal verification. It was stated that the prospects for societal verification were good, owing to the increased use of the Internet and social networks by individuals, which might help and strengthen verification efforts at the grass-roots level since many of those actors operated on the ground and their social networks tended to have "better" or more "independent" information. A comment was also made on the evolution of technology and how it could possibly make verification more effective.

24. In connection with the verification of a fissile material cut-off treaty, many members stated that it was important to address a wide range of questions, including on the meaning and scope of the treaty; on which multilateral institution should be mandated to undertake the verification; on whether there should be separate international instruments for verification or whether internationally verifiable measures should be included in the basic instrument; and on the costs involved.

Mention was also made of the need for such a verification system to be legally binding.

25. Also noteworthy were opinions stating that although a universal and absolute verification system was difficult to achieve, there was still a need to develop internationally accepted global norms on verification. Views were also expressed on the need to determine more precisely what "militarily significant" meant in the field of verification and on the need to take into consideration the fact that commercial activities could and had been used to avoid verification, such as in the case of biological weapons.

26. The Board agreed that Governments should pay more attention to the results of independent inspections and engage in periodic reviews of work done by various inspection agencies/multilateral institutions in order to chart avenues to improve the work done at that level.

Recommendations

27. **The Board made the following recommendations:**

(a) **The Secretary-General could encourage Member States to provide feedback on all studies that have been done in the field of verification for lessons learned purposes and for a better understanding that a "one-size-fits-all" approach in the field of verification could be counterproductive;**

(b) **While the United Nations has primary responsibility in dealing with international peace and security issues, it could consider a role for regional organizations in verification matters.**

C. Conceptual issues leading up to the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

28. At its fifty-first session, the Board agreed to discuss a third agenda item on conceptual issues leading up to the 2010 Review Conference, with a view to providing the Secretary-General with a set of concrete and practical recommendations prior to the 2010 Review Conference. The new item was subsequently added to the Board agenda for its July session.

29. Two Board members, Nobuyasu Abe and Kate Dewes, presented food-for-thought papers on the topic at the fifty-first session.

30. The Board recognized and welcomed recent developments in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, which might have a positive impact on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review process, including the positive outcome of the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; the ongoing nuclear negotiations between the United States of America and the Russian Federation; the call of United States President Obama for a nuclear-weapon-free world and his commitment to have the United States Senate ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (with Indonesia signifying it will also ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty following ratification of the Treaty by the United States); and the respective strategic posture reviews by the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

31. Many members agreed that the new positive momentum towards achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world should be further strengthened. A view was expressed that the 2010 Review Conference needed to show progress and that this could be facilitated by progress made by the United States on the policy declarations of President Obama, preferably before the 2010 Review Conference.

32. Several members also expressed the view that a strong message by the Secretary-General on the 2010 Review Conference would be of vital political importance and would have a positive effect on the non-proliferation agenda. It was also emphasized that the Secretary-General should maintain the political momentum for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament already under way, setting it in the context of the overall international and regional security situations.

33. The Board identified other important elements that could help to strengthen the positive political momentum, such as the need to encourage States to ratify the IAEA Additional Protocols, preferably before the 2010 Review Conference; the need for nuclear-weapon States to adhere to the Protocols of all existing nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties; and the need for equal attention to be paid to the three pillars of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy), which should be considered together and not separately.

34. Other noteworthy comments included calls for a fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament in the near future and for taking regional security considerations into account, as well as genuine concerns over energy security by States, in particular in the developing world.

35. Concerns were also expressed about potential negative factors that could cast a shadow on the positive momentum, such as the nuclear weapons development programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the outstanding issues concerning the Islamic Republic of Iran and the issue of non-State parties to the Treaty possessing nuclear arsenals. Views were also expressed that withdrawal from the Treaty should be discouraged and that there was a need for timely and concrete action to deal with the matter.

36. Some members, however, voiced caution by stressing the need to have both realistic and practical expectations about the outcome of the 2010 Review Conference. The importance of identifying and working with both potential "deal makers" and "deal breakers" was also stressed.

Recommendations

37. **The Board made the following recommendations:**

(a) **The Secretary-General should continue to provide his strong support for the positive political momentum in the field of bilateral and multilateral nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation through effective diplomatic channels, as well as through public statements;**

(b) **The Secretary-General should encourage States to sign the additional protocols and to implement as many confidence-building measures as possible;**

(c) **Given new developments since his proposed five-point plan of October 2008, the Secretary-General might consider advancing an updated version of the plan.**

III. Meeting with the Secretary-General

38. The Board met with the Secretary-General on 18 February 2009. Members of the Board took the opportunity to exchange views on issues related to multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation.

IV. Civil society/non-governmental organization presentations

39. As is customary, the Board heard presentations on issues pertaining to its agenda from representatives of non-governmental organizations during both of its sessions. On verification, presentations were made at the fifty-first session by James Acton, Associate in the Non-Proliferation Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Andreas Persbo, Verification Research, Training and Information Centre.

40. At the Board's fifty-second session, Beatrice Fihn, a Research Officer in the Programme on the Geopolitical Implications of Globalisation and Transnational Security at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, and Arend J. Meerburg, a member of the International Panel on Fissile Materials, briefed the Board on issues related to a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

V. Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

41. At its fifty-first session, the Advisory Board, sitting as the Board of Trustees, welcomed the new Director of UNIDIR, Theresa Hitchens. The Board received a comprehensive briefing from the Director and the Deputy Director, Christiane Agboton Johnson, on the work of the Institute since the previous session of the Board in July 2008 and on its planned activities for 2009. The Board commended the work carried out by UNIDIR and expressed support for its activities.

42. The Board formally adopted the Institute's 2009 programme of work and budget (see A/63/177), which had been presented at the Board's fiftieth session, held in Geneva in July 2008, taking into account the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions contained in a letter dated 12 February 2009. The Board also took note of the Office of Internal Oversight Services internal audit report on UNIDIR and both the Secretary-General's and the Institute's responses to the recommendations made by the Office.

43. At its fifty-second session, the Director of the Institute gave a briefing to Board members on the work undertaken by UNIDIR since its previous meeting. A subcommittee on UNIDIR, consisting of five Board members, met prior to the regular session, on 30 June, to review the UNIDIR programme in detail.

44. Members of the Board expressed continued strong support for the work of the Institute. An exchange of views was held on ways to strengthen the Institute's future research programmes and its fund-raising activities.

45. After considering the draft report of the Director on the activities of the Institute for the period from August 2008 to July 2009 and the proposed programme of work and estimated budget for 2009 and 2010, the Board approved the report for

submission to the General Assembly. The Board also recommended the granting of a continuing subvention for UNIDIR from the United Nations regular budget for the biennium 2010-2011.

VI. Future work

46. The Board exchanged views on several possible topics for discussion at its sessions in 2010, including a wide range of issues such as the trafficking of conventional arms, ammunition, small arms and light weapons, an arms trade treaty, biosecurity, terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction, a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and missile-related issues. Some members also proposed that focused consideration be given to the issue of disarmament education.

47. The Board agreed to continue its consideration of the third agenda item, entitled "Conceptual issues leading up to the 2010 NPT Review Conference" at its next session in February, given continuing developments in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and to provide the Secretary-General with a new set of recommendations prior to the Review Conference scheduled to be held in May 2010.

48. Other possible topics suggested were (a) the illicit trafficking of conventional arms; (b) humanitarian disarmament issues with reference to cluster munitions or the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons; and (c) follow-up discussions to the 2002 United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education.

VII. Conclusions

49. Although the Board recognized the issue of cyberwarfare as an emerging risk/threat to international security, the highly complex nature of the topic required the broader involvement of governmental, academic and scientific communities in discussing the possible implications of such technologies. The Board believed that more detailed work and studies were required before the matter could be considered in the context of arms control and disarmament. The Board's exchange of views on the issue of verification focused largely on multilateral nuclear verification issues. The Board stressed that in order for multilateral verification processes to be successful there was a need for such processes to be perceived as independent by all countries. Many Board members also agreed that multilateral verification was complex, costly and challenging to enforce. The Board welcomed recent positive developments in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Consequently, the Board recommended that the Secretary-General continue to provide his strong support through effective diplomatic channels and public statements, with a view towards helping to maintain the positive political momentum in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

Annex

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United Nations A/64/287

General Assembly

Distr.: General
12 August 2009

Original: English

Sixty-fourth session
Item 29 of the provisional agenda*

Assistance in mine action

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

On the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention), civil society, Governments and the United Nations have come a long way to end the suffering caused by landmines. Over 41 million landmines have been destroyed. Land has been cleared and returned to communities. Increased numbers of at-risk populations have the knowledge and skills to reduce risks. Survivors and their families are increasingly recognized as having rights to social and economic reintegration into their communities. A total of 156 countries have acceded to the Convention.

In addition to the Mine Ban Convention, other instruments and events during the reporting period have had implications for international mine action, including the United Nations response. In 2006, the United Nations deployed a rapid response capability in Lebanon for the clearance of cluster munitions and worked with civil society and Member States for the development of a binding international instrument prohibiting their use, namely, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which was concluded in Dublin on 30 May 2008 and opened for signature in Oslo on 3 December 2008. Improvised explosive devices pose an increasing challenge to civilians, as well as to United Nations peace operations, humanitarian and development work and the consequences of those devices inexorably affect field operations, putting personnel at risk, necessitating greater security measures, inflicting costs and diminishing the overall efficiency of operations.

* A/64/150.

** The present report was submitted after the deadline in order to incorporate most current information.

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The present report outlines the achievements of the United Nations Mine Action Team since the previous report of the Secretary-General (A/62/307 and Corrs.1-3) in the areas of anti-personnel mine clearance, mine-risk education, victim assistance, stockpile destruction and advocacy pursuant to the four strategic objectives set out in the inter-agency mine action policy and Strategy.[1] The report also includes a proposed forward agenda for mine action.

The road to achieving the collective goal of protecting civilians from explosive remnants of war is a long one and even after all the anti-personnel mines and other explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions, and improvised explosive devices are removed, a major challenge will remain: to provide survivors with all the support they need to become and remain active and productive members of their communities. The Secretary-General reiterates the commitment of the United Nations in supporting Member States in confronting these challenges.

[1] United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy: 2006-2010.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/99, in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on progress achieved on all relevant issues outlined in his previous reports to the Assembly on assistance in mine clearance and mine action.

2. Since the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, commonly known as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention opened for signature in 1997, 156 countries have ratified or acceded to it. More than 41 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines have been destroyed, and their production, sale and transfer have in essence stopped. The first of March 2009 marked the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention and the Second Review Conference will take place later in 2009 in Cartagena, Colombia.

3. In addition to anti-personnel mines, challenges remain with respect to all other explosive remnants of war. On 12 November 2006, the Secretary-General welcomed the entry into force of Protocol V on explosive remnants of war from the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons[2] and reiterated his call for its universalization and implementation. In December 2008, the Secretary-General welcomed the opening for signature of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which currently has 98 signatories and 14 ratifications and acceptances, and encourages its rapid entry into force.

4. Guided by its inter-agency policy, the United Nations Mine Action Team, consisting of 14 departments, agencies, funds and programmes,[3] and with observer entities, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Office of Legal Affairs and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, continued to ensure system-wide coherence in all mine action pillars and activities and a "One United Nations" approach with full respect for the individual roles and responsibilities and comparative advantage of each of the Team members, through regular meetings of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group for Mine Action at the principal and working levels. Highlighted throughout the present report is the essential role that the United Nations Mine Action Team plays in ensuring that support to countries and territories affected by mines and explosive remnants of war is strategic, effective and efficient.

5. The United Nations strategic goal is to work in cooperation with national authorities, territories, non-State actors, affected communities, and in partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donors, the private sector, international and regional organizations and others to reduce the humanitarian and

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[2] Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

[3] Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Mine Action Service, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization and the World Bank.

socio-economic threats posed by mines and explosive remnants of war, at which point United Nations mine action assistance will no longer be necessary. United Nations mine action activities are guided by four strategic objectives identified in the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2006-2010: reduction of death and injury by at least 50 per cent; mitigate the risk to community livelihoods and expand freedom of movement for at least 80 per cent of the most seriously affected communities; integration of mine action needs into national development and reconstruction plans and budgets in at least 15 countries; assist the development of national institutions to manage the landmine/explosive remnants of war threat, and at the same time prepare for residual response capacity in at least 15 countries.

II. Update on international instruments related to mine action

6. The United Nations continues to advocate for the universalization of existing legal frameworks and to encourage Member States to expand those regimes and develop new international instruments to protect civilians from the scourges of landmines and explosive remnants of war, as was the case with support to the Convention on Cluster Munitions in 2008. It undertakes this work in collaboration with interested states, civil society, mine action and international organizations.

7. The most recent States parties to complete their stockpile destruction obligation under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention have been Ethiopia (April 2009), Burundi (March 2008), the Sudan (March 2008) and Afghanistan, which completed the destruction of its stockpile in October 2007. At the ninth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, the States parties decided on 15 requests to extend clearance deadlines. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provided assistance in the preparation of these extension requests for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, Croatia, Jordan, Mozambique, Senegal, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

8. Since 2007, two parallel and mutually reinforcing processes were conducted with a view to addressing the impact caused by cluster munitions: the "Oslo Process", with the objective of prohibiting cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians; and a process initiated by States parties to the Convention on Conventional Weapons to negotiate a proposal in the Group of Governmental Experts. In late 2008, the text of a draft protocol on cluster munitions was produced by the Group to serve as the basis for negotiations on this protocol. Such negotiations are still ongoing. The United Nations Mine Action Team actively engaged with delegations and provided field-based technical inputs to their deliberations.

9. Member States supporting the Oslo Process met in Oslo (22-23 February 2007), Lima (23 May 2007), Vienna (5-7 December 2007), Wellington (18-22 February 2008) and at the Diplomatic Conference in Dublin (19-30 May 2008), where they adopted the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The United Nations actively participated in the process by providing evidence of the humanitarian, human rights and development impact of cluster munitions. On 4 December 2008, 94 States signed the Convention, four ratified it, and there was one provisional application. In addition to undertaking global advocacy efforts, UNDP provided particular support by assisting the organization of 15 global and regional meetings, including by administering sponsorship programmes on behalf of

more than 750 Government delegates from low-income countries and countries affected by cluster munitions. The Secretary-General, who accepted depositary duties under the Convention on Cluster Munitions, has welcomed the new legal instrument and pledged to provide full support and assistance in the implementation of States parties' responsibilities.

10. The Secretary-General also continued to express support for negotiations on cluster munitions in the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons as complementary to, and mutually reinforcing of, the Convention on Cluster Munitions. He urged that further deliberations in 2009 be guided by the humanitarian principles that make up the very basis of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the benchmark set by the new Convention on Cluster Munitions.

11. Beyond the scope of cluster munitions, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, with its 110 High Contracting Parties, aims to protect military troops from inhumane injuries and prevent civilians from being harmed by certain types of conventional weapons. Two of its protocols are particularly relevant to mine action: Amended Protocol II on mines, booby traps and other devices, which has 93 signatories, and Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War, which has 59 signatories. The United Nations provided technical advice and input to the coordinators for national reporting on draft article 4, an electronic reporting template, victim assistance, generic preventive measures and the explosive remnants of war database.

12. Statements by the United Nations Mine Action Team to the annual Conferences of High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II in 2007-2009 highlighted the need to enhance the existing international rules applicable to anti-vehicle mines and other mines not defined as anti-personnel. In 2008-2009, the United Nations actively supported regional seminars aimed at promoting the universalization of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, an initiative of the Office for Disarmament Affairs financed by the European Union through a European Council joint action. Seminars were held in Santo Domingo, Lomé, Almaty, Rabat and Kathmandu. In line with the United Nations advocacy priorities in furthering all relevant instruments, the universalization of the Convention and particularly of Amended Protocol II and Protocol V, represents an important advocacy objective.

13. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006 and opened for signature on 30 March 2007. The Convention entered into force on 3 May 2008, and by July 2009, 60 States had become parties to it, including countries affected by landmines and/or explosive remnants of war. As of the same date, 38 States had ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol.[4]

14. To support the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2006, the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination established an Inter-Agency Support Group to the Convention. As the representative of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, participation in the United Nations Mine Action Service in meetings and deliberations in 2008 was

[4] Updated information on the status of the Convention and its Optional Protocol is available at: http://treaties.un.org/Pages/Treaties.aspx?id=4&subid=A&lang=en.

informed by a survey of select peacekeeping and political missions[5] that indicated a general awareness of the Convention and its provisions, and of opportunities to address the specific needs and rights of persons with disabilities especially with regard to participation, non-discrimination and accessibility. The Service, in coordination with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and with the assistance of the Survivor Corps (previously known as the Landmine Survivor's Network), developed an Advocacy Toolkit[6] aimed at disseminating information on the Convention and the Optional Protocol in order to promote greater understanding and assist States parties in implementing their obligations.

15. In January 2008, the former UNDP Administrator emphasized the importance of mainstreaming disability issues as an integral part of relevant strategies for sustainable development. As part of the active UNDP support of the Convention, persons with disabilities have been identified as a key group to be included in the priority areas of poverty reduction and achievement of Millennium Development Goals, democratic governance, and crisis prevention and recovery — particularly relevant to mine action — contained in the 2008-2011 UNDP Strategic Plan.

16. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights has frequently engaged with other United Nations Mine Action Team partners to promote the framing of victim assistance responsibilities in human rights standards and promote the identification of synergies between the various treaties, with a specific focus on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

17. Anti-personnel mines and other victim-activated weapons, including improvised explosive devices, are being used, often with devastating effect, by non-State armed groups in a number of countries, such as Afghanistan, Colombia, Ecuador, India, Iraq, Myanmar, Pakistan and Peru. Under the coordination of Geneva Call, 39 non-State armed groups have thus far signed the Deed of Commitment to refrain from using anti-personnel mines, cooperate in mine action in areas under their control and destroy stockpiles. The Secretary-General encourages all non-State actors to cease the use of landmines and improvised explosive devices and to refrain from using munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians both at the time of use and after conflicts have ended.

18. The report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2009/277) indicates that United Nations actors, including those involved in mine action, should be encouraged to engage with non-State armed groups on issues relating to the use of anti-personnel mines and other types of weapons, with a view to seeking their compliance with the applicable law. According to action 46 of the Nairobi Action Plan, agreed by States parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention at the First Review Conference in 2004, States parties in a position to do so will continue to support mine action that assists affected populations in areas under control of non-State armed groups. The Secretary-General encourages States parties to include a similar provision in the

[5] Such as the United Nations Mission in the Sudan, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Mission in Nepal, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

[6] Available at www.mineaction.org.

outcome of the Second Review Conference in Cartagena later this year, and in its implementation.

III. United Nations approach to mine action

A. Integrating mine action in the United Nations system

19. Mine action has been integrated into many aspects of United Nations work by the United Nations Mine Action Team. This reflects the critical importance of mine action to the success of work in humanitarian emergencies, early recovery, development, security, child protection and human rights for all.

20. Since 1996, the Security Council has recognized that mine action is vital to restoring peace and security and to the deployment of United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions in affected countries and territories. Since 2007, over 50 reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council have referred to mine action. For example, in the recent report of the Secretary-General on the request of Nepal for United Nations assistance in support of its peace process (S/2008/670), the clearance of over 40 minefields laid by the Nepalese Army remains an important goal for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Recent extensions of mandates also acknowledge that mine action efforts support peacekeeping operations as well as humanitarian, early recovery and development activities.

21. In 2007, one third of all casualties were children, while in some countries, the rate was as high as 80 per cent. Data managed through the Information Management System for Mine Action, developed by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, has aided in assessing the situation of populations affected by mines or explosive remnants of war and communities and the development of appropriate prevention strategies and approaches. Mine action will continue to play a significant role in protecting children from the direct and indirect consequences of mines and explosive remnants of war, as well as in providing assistance to child survivors.

22. The United Nations strives to ensure equal participation of women and men in mine action. The United Nations Mine Action Team has multiplied its efforts to ensure that mine action programmes have an equal impact on women, men, boys and girls and that all enjoy equal access to mine action as practitioners and beneficiaries and, as such, that both women and men have a decision-making role in mine action in their respective communities. In 2007 and 2008 the United Nations Mine Action Team convened national and international mine action practitioners in two global workshops at Nairobi and at the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi, Italy (UNLB), respectively.

23. The Stocktaking Workshop, which was held at UNLB, was a high point in the gender learning cycle, in which representatives from national mine action authorities, UNDP, the United Nations Mine Action Service and UNICEF field participants, trainers and gender specialists coalesced around a common understanding of gender mainstreaming, validated the gender national action plan model and made concrete recommendations for follow-up action. In 2009, the United Nations Mine Action Team supported field-led initiatives to implement

recommendations made by national and field colleagues, including the Asia Gender Regional Workshop, held in March, and the development of a pilot gender community of practice.

B. Servicing the mine action community

24. One of the roles of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group for Mine Action is to monitor global threats from mines and other explosive remnants of war. Potential threats and the United Nations Mine Action Team recommended responses are reviewed monthly at coordination meetings to determine appropriate courses of action.

25. Effective planning and a rapid response to an emergency are key to United Nations Mine Action Team efforts to mitigate threats from landmines and explosive remnants of war. Since 2001, the Framework for Mine Action Planning and Rapid Response has provided an overarching structure and approach, within which members of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group for Mine Action plan appropriate responses and facilitate the rapid deployment of assessment missions. Using unearmarked funds, the United Nations Mine Action Service launched a short-notice inter-agency technical assessment mission after the conflict in Georgia in 2008 and deployed a team in less than one week to establish a Mine Action Coordination Centre in Gaza in 2009. Under the overall United Nations framework for early recovery, the United Nations Mine Action Team established a Mine Action Coordination Centre in Gaza to assist the civilian population and humanitarian agencies.

26. In June 2008, the United Nations Mine Action Service held its fifth annual rapid response training exercise in Sweden, in conjunction with its standby logistics support partner, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (formerly known as the Swedish Rescue Services Agency). This activity focused on establishing a mine action coordination centre in an emergency environment. The 2009 exercise included opportunities for greater participation by components of the Office for Rule of Law and Security Institutions.

27. Internal or external evaluations were undertaken, in Afghanistan, Chad, Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal, Somalia, the Sudan and Western Sahara. Inter-agency missions were also carried out in Somalia (January 2009), Egypt (April 2009) and Iraq (May 2009). UNDP supported planning and programming through missions by the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery to Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Somalia, the Sudan, Tajikistan and Uganda among others, where mine action was also considered in the context of early recovery, disaster risk reduction and community security.

28. International Mine Action Standards remain an important foundation for mine action programming and are kept relevant through an annual review process. The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining assists the United Nations Mine Action Service to manage the review process. Four new International Mine Action Standards were endorsed providing guidance on the establishment of mine action programmes, battle area clearance, mine action and the environment, and

evaluations. Work continued on eight new standards[7] including three that will replace two existing standards to describe more clearly the process of releasing land that has been considered suspect. In addition, a thorough review of all standards was commissioned to ensure that they adequately address gender issues.

29. Introduction of new technologies for mine action has steadily moved forward and more programmes are using more machines than ever before. Machines reduce the costs of clearance and increase outputs in many situations and the advantages and effectiveness of the open tiller arrangement are reflected in the number of new machines produced offering this capability. While there is no revolutionary demining solution, significant improvements continue to be made in areas with traditional equipment, such as metal detectors, some of which can now discern the size and type of metal.

30. The coordination and exchange of information on new techniques and technologies has been assisted through the forums of annual meetings held in Croatia (2008) and Geneva (2009), supported by United Nations Mine Action Service and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, as well as publications which include a periodical *Technology Newsletter*, produced by the two entities, and the *Journal of Mine Action* produced by the James Madison University.

31. While all Member States share the costs of mine action activities in certain United Nations peacekeeping operations, as assessed by the General Assembly, many countries made additional voluntary extrabudgetary resources available to a number of thematic and geographic trust funds to address, inter alia, the funding requirements of mine action, such as the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action, the UNDP Thematic Trust Fund for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, UNICEF, the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, the Common Humanitarian Fund for the Sudan, the Pooled Fund for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Peace Fund for Nepal.

32. The Mine Action Support Group, which is chaired on a rotating basis by donor countries with secretariat support from the United Nations Mine Action Service, continued to convene regularly. The Support Group provides an opportunity for donors and the United Nations to share information on emerging trends, operational priorities, funding gaps and the effective and efficient coordination and implementation of mine action.

33. The portfolio of mine action projects compiled by the United Nations Mine Action Service, UNDP and UNICEF continues to be a unique resource tool. The portfolio aims to reflect national strategic plans, priorities and the proposed activities of implementing partners. Since the previous report of the Secretary-General, the preparation process has been fully automated, with an online, web-based system. The 2008 Portfolio of Mine Action Projects presented a total budget of $402.9 million and featured 390 projects from 34 countries and territories, as well as United Nations Headquarters. The high level of participation from stakeholders signals the maturity of the coordination mechanisms at the field level. A total of 101 appealing agencies and organizations submitted proposals.

[7] Standards under development: Information management; Land release; Non-technical survey; Technical survey; Demining machine operator's safety; Application of demining machines; Quality assurance and quality control after mechanical clearance; and Guidelines for support to victims.

34. Contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action up to 1 May 2009 in the biennium 2008-2009 totalled $126.7 million. In 2008, voluntary contributions were provided by 17 Governments, the European Commission and the Common Humanitarian Fund for the Sudan. Assessed contributions, since 1 July 2002, total $250.5 million to support mine action mandates in United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions in Burundi, Chad, Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Lebanon, Somalia, the Sudan and Western Sahara. In the financial year 2008/09, $63.4 million have been appropriated, compared with $7.2 million in the financial year 2002/03.

35. Between 2007 and 2008, donor funding through the UNDP Thematic Trust Fund for Crisis Prevention and Recovery totalling $15.4 million supported 26 mine action programmes.[8] For the same period, additional donor funding totalling $5.2 million through the Fund supported global and national advocacy activities, national organization of conferences and sponsorship programmes.

36. The Inter-Agency Communications Working Group for Mine Action planned and implemented public and media awareness-raising about events such as the launch of the 2009 Portfolio of Mine Action Projects, the ninth Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the opening for signature of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the presentation of the Nansen Award to the Mine Action Coordination Centre in south Lebanon and the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, which was featured by newspapers, magazines and broadcasters in more than 40 countries and territories. Media training specifically targeting senior national mine action managers was conducted during the Annual Meeting of National Mine Action Directors and United Nations Advisers held in Geneva in March 2009.

37. The United Nations Mine Action Service coordinated with the United Nations Department of Public Information in New York and its global network of information centres to disseminate messages to local and international media. United Nations Mine Action Service field offices used material provided by Headquarters to support their own media relations linked to global events. Media training for field programmes was conducted at UNLB.

38. In 2008, improvements to the mine action website (www.mineaction.org) included updating the Human Rights Treaty Monitoring Database, which allows users to track which countries have ratified treaties related to mine action. Approximately 1,000 different visitors access www.mineaction.org every week, and even more during special events, such as the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action.

[8] Albania, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Chad, Colombia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Jordan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Malawi, Mauritania, Senegal, Somalia, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uganda, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

IV. Progress achieved in the implementation of the United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy for 2006-2010

39. The United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy for 2006-2010 outlines strategic objectives, activities related to each objective and indicators to measure progress of implementation. It is informed by "Mine action and effective coordination: the United Nations inter-agency policy" and promotes achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Progress and achievements during the reporting period are as follows but not limited to:

A. Strategic objective 1: Reduction of death and injury by at least 50 per cent

40. The United Nations, by assisting national authorities, where relevant, to establish baseline data, mark and fence mined areas, clear and destroy mines and explosive remnants of war, conduct mine-risk education and provide assistance to survivors, is contributing to the prevention and reduction of deaths and injuries, and the identification of survivors.

41. Recent statistics indicate that the number of casualties globally has decreased significantly since 2007. Nevertheless, statistics also indicate that the residual threat of anti-personnel mines, the threat of new mines and the increased use of improvised explosive devices in a few areas continue to injure women, girls, boys and men.

42. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, improved coordination of mine-risk education activities and an increase in mine action operations contributed to a significant decrease in the number of reported casualties. In 2007 and 2008, 239 victims, including 39 new victims, were identified by the United Nations Mine Action Programme, compared with only 17 in 2009 up to 31 May. With technical support from UNICEF, mine-risk education national standards and a strategy were developed. Implementing partners organized 6,200 mine-risk education sessions, reaching approximately 1.2 million people. Efforts were concentrated within the six most affected provinces of the country: North and South Kivu, Katanga, Maniema, Equateur and Orientale. The United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo played a key role in providing air support for transportation and evacuation services.

43. In south Lebanon, thanks to extensive clearance and risk-education efforts that continued through 2008, civilian casualties were dramatically reduced. Farmers were able to increase the productive capacity and economic stability of their communities. On 6 October 2008, the Mine Action Coordination Centre in south Lebanon, managed by the United Nations Mine Action Service, was awarded the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award, for which 1,000 deminers were selected. In the words of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres: "Through their painstaking work and devotion, the teams created the conditions for a safe and dignified return home for almost a million displaced Lebanese." The award funds were used to purchase cows for 43 families in seven villages that depend on their livestock for their livelihood and which had lost animals as a result of the conflict.

44. In Mozambique, casualty rates dropped to almost zero in 2009, a phenomenon that can be attributed in part to intense mine-risk education activities. UNDP has been actively engaged in Mozambique mine action since 1995 and has played a pivotal role in addressing all aspects of mine action. In Mauritania, effective mine clearance and mine-risk education in affected areas contributed to zero new victims being reported in 2008 and in the first half of 2009.

45. Interventions in the field of mine clearance and mine-risk education by the United Nations Mine Action Service and UNICEF in Nepal have drastically reduced the number of injuries and deaths. Following the downsizing of the United Nations Mission in Nepal, the Government of Nepal indicated in a letter to the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator that it would be unable to clear its minefields without the support of the United Nations. Hence, the United Nations Mine Action Team has established a full programme to support the Nepalese Army clearance activities and to build capacity for risk education and assistance to survivors.

46. The northern regions of Somalia have also seen a dramatic reduction in deaths and injuries, due in part to UNDP-supported work. In both "Puntland" and "Somaliland", rates of injuries and deaths have dropped well below the 50 per cent target. UNDP provided technical expertise to support mine action institutions by training nine national clearance teams. In south central Somalia, unverified data suggests that the numbers of victims of mines and explosive remnants of war may be increasing. The United Nations Mine Action Service is beginning to build capacity in this region, conducting surveys of affected communities and providing mine-risk education, but the security situation has impeded progress and there is an urgent need for more victim assistance in south central Somalia.

47. In Sri Lanka, between 2005 and March 2009, despite an increase in reported mine-related incidents in the north and the east of the country, no deaths from landmines and explosive remnants of war were reported and injuries decreased by 80 per cent. The escalating humanitarian situation in the north in April 2009 has led to new reports of patients with mine/explosive remnants of war injuries arriving at hospitals. Official and verified data are, however, not available. The overall reduction in casualties over the past two years is largely due to a successful programme managed by the Government and implemented by the army and several NGOs, in addition to mine-risk education activities that have been carried out with technical support from UNICEF, which has also partnered with Government and local organizations to assist over 13,000 persons with disabilities.

48. Thanks to clearance and mine-risk education efforts, the Sudan is also reaching the near-zero casualty rate after a brief rise in the number of reported victims, due to increased population movement in 2006-2007. The demining component of the World Food Programme (WFP) "Emergency road repair and mine clearance of key transport routes" project removed over 200,000 mines and unexploded ordnance, with 220 km of roads demined in 2008. WFP is handing over the demining activity to the United Nations Mine Action Office, which has agreed to take on mine clearance priorities of the project. Open routes have facilitated the return of displaced persons, economic trade and businesses, humanitarian delivery, and pre-positioning of WFP food assistance in remote areas that become inaccessible during the rainy season. WFP now delivers the majority of its food assistance by road in South Sudan and only uses air drops when road access is cut

off by heavy rains and floods. There is also a comprehensive victim assistance programme in the Sudan, monitored and evaluated by the United Nations, in coordination with the national authorities.

49. In Eritrea, the recent development of a national database on persons with disabilities, in collaboration with the Eritrean Demining Authority and the Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare, confirms that most accidents happen to civilians, in particular children, following their livestock or playing. An integrated team of trained mine-risk education and mine/unexploded ordnance clearance has been deployed with support from UNDP and UNICEF. The United Nations also supported the implementation of community-based rehabilitation programmes for survivors. The contamination is, however still large, and between 2007 and 2008, casualties increased by about 30 per cent.

50. In the Kurdistan region of Iraq, the drought of 2007 and 2008 forced shepherds into areas contaminated by explosive remnants of war. This more than doubled the number of deaths in 2008. To alleviate the situation for landmine and explosive remnants of war survivors, UNDP, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) and civil society have established a victim assistance project in the region. The project strengthens the emergency response and provides psychological and physical rehabilitation to, and socio-economic rehabilitation of, persons with disabilities. UNDP and UNICEF are supporting the Government of Iraq in meeting its obligations under the Mine Ban Convention through the establishment of a regulatory framework, the dissemination of nationwide surveys and the development of national strategies, policies and capacities for all pillars of mine action. An increase in casualties has also been registered in Jordan, where most of the incidents are related to people collecting unexploded ordnance, and for the same reason in Zambia, where UNICEF has provided mine-risk education to refugee populations.

51. In other areas, the number of reported casualties has remained stable despite strenuous clearance and mine-risk education efforts. In Afghanistan, the influx of returnees who are unfamiliar with their surroundings, coupled with the impact of poverty and scrap metal collection, is the cause of most civilian casualties. In this context, the United Nations provides support to the Government to develop its capacity and strengthen its response to persons with disabilities. Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Russian Federation (Chechen Republic), Tajikistan and Uganda saw a slightly decreasing trend, while still dealing with the movement of internally displaced persons, children playing with unexploded ordnance and border area incidents. Some countries, including Uganda, have been able to develop comprehensive plans for victim assistance. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNICEF supported national strategic objectives and the mitigation of the impact of landmines. In some countries and territories, such as the Chechen Republic (Russian Federation), where UNICEF conducted mine-risk education in every secondary school, more can be done to multiply employment opportunities for survivors and provide psychosocial assistance.

52. In addition to civilian victims of mines and explosive remnants of war, personnel involved in removing those hazards continue to be killed and injured. The Secretary-General expresses his appreciation to those who have lost their lives or have been maimed by mines or explosive remnants of war and extends his sympathy to their families.

B. Strategic objective 2: Mitigate the risk to community livelihoods and expand freedom of movement for at least 80 per cent of the most seriously affected communities

53. Mines and explosive remnants of war diminish farmers' livelihoods and impede housing, resettlement and grazing of livestock. The United Nations assists in the identification of and prioritization among those communities suffering the highest levels of socio-economic impact and restriction of movement, focusing on releasing land for productive use and ensuring adequate monitoring systems to measure progress. The goal is to make available land and transport routes and to ensure freedom of movement and access to essential infrastructure.

54. Surveys of suspected areas, conducted in 13 countries and territories — Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Iraq, Mauritania, Mozambique, the Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uganda and Zambia — indicate that the number of cleared communities, the kilometres of roads cleared and area of land released have substantially increased. This has allowed for the return of communities, increased land and infrastructure available for grazing, agriculture, road development and economic development projects.

55. In Afghanistan, the number of affected communities that were cleared of explosive hazards has doubled in the reporting period, although hazards, including improvised explosive devices, continue to be discovered. The clearance of power lines from Uzbekistan, which led to increased electricity supply to Kabul, is an example of the benefits of mine action. In Afghanistan, the clearance of a copper mine will result in the creation of hundreds of jobs and a boost to the national economy. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, up to 1,631 communities per annum have benefited from mine action activities carried out by UNDP and UNICEF in cooperation with the municipalities.

56. In eastern Chad, the Mine Action Unit of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) was able to confirm 211 communities free of impact. The Secretary-General hopes that future MINURCAT budgets will continue to fund road verification programmes in eastern Chad. In Cyprus, with funding from the European Commission, a major crossing point was opened in Nicosia, and three minefields were cleared with 82 per cent of the mined area in the buffer zone now cleared. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a nationwide landmine impact survey has not been possible; however, mine action operations have resulted in the clearance of more than 1.2 square kilometres of land, and the opening of roads used by local communities and humanitarian organizations. More recently, clearance teams were deployed in Goma and its environs, where mine-risk education was also provided. In Ethiopia, a more comprehensive picture of contamination was developed with continued technical advice, resource mobilization, capacity development and quality assurance provided by UNDP. Nearly 16 square kilometres of suspect land were released to some 130,000 people and put into productive use.

57. In Eritrea, approximately 7,500 displaced persons returned home after clearance of key infrastructure. The requirements of the country for addressing humanitarian challenges, such as ensuring the safe return of internally displaced persons in Debub and Gash Barka, and contributing to food security, remain high. In Iraq, where no records have been kept since the beginning of the recent conflict,

approximately 3,300 communities were affected and 220 are now free of impact. The United Nations supported the clearance of some 15 square kilometres of land that benefited approximately 1,500 farmers and their families. UNICEF, in coordination with UNDP and the National Directorate of Mine Action, conducts mine-risk education programmes, strengthens national capacity and supports the establishment of a victim surveillance mechanism. The Secretary-General remains concerned that civilian demining efforts have not resumed fully since December 2008 and encourages the Government of Iraq to facilitate such efforts.

58. In Lebanon, in 2007-2008, the Lebanon Mine Action Centre, together with the south Lebanon United Nations Mine Action Centre, coordinated the clearance or release through other mine action techniques of over 42 square kilometres of land contaminated by cluster munitions. Over 150,000 bomblets and 16,000 other explosive remnants of war were found and destroyed. Since January 2009, the remaining United Nations Mine Action Service staff has been supporting both the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and troop-contributing countries. In Mozambique, just under 5 square kilometres of land have been cleared since 2007 from a baseline of 541 affected areas, representing approximately 12 square kilometres. Release of land known or suspected to contain mines has had a significant socio-economic impact and further clearance will contribute to the objectives of the Government's poverty reduction strategy.

59. In Nepal, the United Nations Mine Action Team has provided assistance in measuring the landmine and explosive remnants of war problem and strengthening national capacity. Progress has been made in the clearance of military minefields, allowing the development and expansion of communication sites, as well as a power station that will increase electricity output by 10 per cent. Significantly, the United Nations has overseen the destruction of over 18,000 improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war, mostly in support of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

60. In Sri Lanka, conflict during the reporting period resulted in new mine and explosive remnants of war contamination in some areas and, for a period, the suspension of all mine action activities, including clearance and survey. The Government and army have worked to clear these areas with the support of UNDP, UNICEF and several NGOs, which have been scaling up to meet the clearance demands. In areas not affected by the fighting, battle area clearance and demining made available a reported 300 square kilometres of land to displaced populations for resettlement, productive use, transport routes and other purposes.

61. Progress has been made in the Somali region of "Somaliland", where since 2005, a third of all suspect areas have been returned to communities and clearance has opened roads and provided access to schools. UNDP has supported the provision of mine-risk education in "Somaliland", which in 2008 reached 71,677 people. In the Somali region of "Puntland", a United Nations-supported NGO clearance team resumed operations in August 2008. Thus far 2,642 explosive remnants of war items have been removed and "Puntland's" last remaining stockpile of anti-personnel landmines has been destroyed. Mine-risk education remains limited, although UNICEF has included the issue in its work on child protection. There has, however, been progress in mine-risk education in south central Somalia, with the United Nations Mine Action Programme reaching 26,343 individuals in 2008 and 4,782 in

2009. United Nations agencies have also collaborated to provide emergency mine-risk education for internally displaced persons prior to any return.

62. In the Sudan, the landmine impact survey completed in June 2009 recorded 65 impacted communities and 162 suspected hazardous areas in the reporting period, adding to a total of 268 impacted communities and 605 suspected hazardous areas. Major accomplishments were made in route clearance with the north and south of the country now joined by road as well as 241 suspected hazardous areas cleared in a number of highly impacted communities. In Tajikistan, it was reported that nearly 60 per cent of pastures are underutilized due to the threat posed by explosive remnants of war. In addition to the support provided by UNDP to the national programme managed by the Tajikistan Mine Action Centre, UNICEF, pending the Government's approval, intends to support mine-risk education in schools, while also multiplying education efforts outside the school system. In northern Uganda, through its support to mine clearance, UNDP facilitated the return of more than 1 million displaced persons and ensured that clearance and risk education was adequately addressed. In 2008 alone, clearance activities by the Government, with United Nations support, released over 77 square kilometres of land for agricultural use and transport routes. In Mauritania, the adoption of a land release policy, combined with clearance efforts, enabled the release of 14 square kilometres of land in 2008.

63. In Zambia, UNDP, with NGO support, assisted in the conduct of a nationwide survey to assist the country in meeting its obligations under the Convention. In coordination with UNICEF and UNHCR, UNDP provided mine-risk education for the refugee community. In 2008, support was given to the Government in linking clearance tasks with development.

64. These are considerable achievements. Nevertheless, much remains to be done and the United Nations still faces challenges in countries and territories that have witnessed new or renewed conflicts or where post-conflict reconstruction is hindered by a lack of security, poor infrastructure, weak national coordination mechanisms, or funding obstacles. Nationwide surveys are still under development in some countries and territories. The United Nations, with national mine action practitioners, in coordination with humanitarian workers and peacekeepers and with the generous support of donor countries, remains committed to the investment that is mine action, to enable affected communities to regain freedom of movement and improve their socio-economic situation.

C. Strategic objective 3: Integration of mine action needs into national development and reconstruction plans and budgets in at least 15 countries

65. Mine action is not conducted in isolation, but is, rather, integrated into development strategies and promotes national ownership. The United Nations provides support to national authorities to develop the capacity necessary to manage and coordinate all aspects of mine action, and seeks to ensure that transition plans from assisted programmes to nationally managed ones are sustainable. The United

Nations assisted 26 countries and territories[9] in integrating mine action into their national development plans and budgets and to mobilize national resources to finance mine action activities.

66. Several countries have made significant progress in integrating mine action into their national development plans with the support of UNDP and other United Nations partners. For example, both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Tajikistan have integrated mine action into their poverty reduction strategy papers. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the national mine action strategy for 2009-2019 was developed and strengthened with support from UNDP and UNICEF, which contributed funds and technical assistance. Bosnia and Herzegovina has also identified a priority for its United Nations Development Assistance Framework human security target outcomes 2010-2014, in which the Government will adopt a regulatory policy and institutional framework to address the threat posed by landmines and explosive remnants of war. Cambodia, Chad, Senegal, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Tajikistan and Yemen have also integrated mine action into their United Nations development assistance frameworks.

67. In Eritrea, with UNDP support, the demining authority has established a strategic plan for mine action through 2009. The plan addresses the goals of the strategic objectives, and the Government has developed national capacities to deal with mine action problems. In Ethiopia, the national mine action authority has also established a national strategic plan for 2006-2011 with support from the United Nations and Cranfield University.

68. In Albania, mine action has been integrated into the National Action Plan for Pre-Accession to the European Union. The Government of Azerbaijan has included the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action into its National Plan on Socio-economic Development, and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has identified mine action as one of the critical development areas to be included in its United Nations development plan.

69. In Mozambique, the Government's Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty 2005-2009 emphasizes the importance of addressing mine-contamination problems in the context of sustainable development. The plan will be extended to 2011.

70. In Cambodia, mine action has been integrated into the National Strategic Development Plan, and a ninth Millennium Development Goal has been created to address victim assistance and mine action. The Lao People's Democratic Republic's national strategic plan for mine and unexploded ordnance action, "The Safe Path Forward" will be integrated into the Government's National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy.

71. In Sri Lanka, mine action has been included in development plans at the district and district divisional level. For Uganda, mine action is part of the Country Programme Action Plan and has been fully integrated in the Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan, the main Government framework for stabilization and recovery in the northern region.

[9] Afghanistan, Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Kosovo, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nepal, the Russian Federation (Chechen Republic), Somalia, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uganda, Yemen and Zambia.

72. The United Nations provided guidance to the Government of Afghanistan in determining realistic targets for the Afghan Compact and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, which aims to reduce the contaminated area by 70 per cent by 2011. The United Nations is also supporting the Republic of Cyprus in achieving its commitments to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention by clearing minefields within the United Nations-administered buffer zone with financial support from the European Commission and recently the Government of Cyprus.

73. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, mine action is not yet reflected in national plans, but the United Nations is facilitating efforts by the Government — which the Secretary-General fully supports — to adopt a mine action law and endorse a national structure. In Eritrea, following the establishment of a national mine action authority, UNDP has supported the adoption of the National Mine Action Strategic Plan that indicates Eritrea's commitment to the coordination and management of its national mine action programme, and UNICEF is supporting the existing national capacity with regard to mine-risk education and victim surveillance. In Ethiopia, humanitarian demining carried out with the assistance of the United Nations is expected to contribute to the attainment of all eight key elements of the country's poverty reduction strategy.

74. In Iraq, the integration of mine action into national plans is pending approval, in 2009, of the new National Development Strategy. UNDP has supported the Ministry of the Environment in integrating mine action into the new National Development Strategy and is developing cost-sharing arrangements with the Government. In Jordan, mine action is factored into the district development planning process and the United Nations supported the development and implementation of the five-year national mine action plan. Mine action in Lebanon, Mauritania and Mozambique is linked to national development and reconstruction plans through ad hoc coordination mechanisms, and UNDP was instrumental in the development of new national mine action policies, which will enable formal integration of mine action into the development and reconstruction sectors.

75. In Nepal, the United Nations helped to ensure that mine action was included in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Agreement on Monitoring the Management of Arms and Armies, which constitute the legal framework for subsequent legislation. The United Nations is also working to strengthen systematic coordination and prioritization mechanisms and to mainstream mine action into the United Nations country team planning, and is continuing its engagement with the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction on mine action tasks.

76. In the "Somaliland" region of Somalia, mine action forms a part of development and reconstruction plans for flood protection and road construction. In January 2009, "Somaliland" passed legislation banning anti-personnel landmines that is reflective of the main provisions of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and which establishes guidelines for implementation monitoring.

77. In the Sudan, the Five-Year Strategic Plan 2007-2011 of the Government of National Unity includes mine action strategic goals. The Government of National Unity supported the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement, which called for mine action centres to be established. The Government of South Sudan developed a five-year mine action plan and the United Nations supports close collaboration in the clearance priorities required by the authorities. In Thailand, Tajikistan and Uganda, mine action is integrated into national

development plans, which require mine action providers to coordinate their efforts nationally. In Zambia, the United Nations has supported the development of an interim mine action strategy until such time as the ongoing nationwide survey is completed.

78. The United Nations supports efforts to ensure the rights of landmine and explosive remnants of war survivors within the context of national programmes and facilities for persons with disabilities. The reporting obligation established under article 35 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities offers insight into monitoring progress towards the achievement of this strategic objective. To support field colleagues in taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the system of monitoring the Convention, the United Nations Mine Action Service developed a database on the www.mineaction.org website. This database enables field colleagues to contribute to national reporting, either by providing data to the national report, or to the United Nations counterpart that is submitting information to the treaty body.

79. The United Nations Mine Action Team is also monitoring the status of signature and ratification of the Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol and the associated harmonization of national legislative and policy frameworks. Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at a national level might result in a review of national mine action plans, in relation to victim assistance provisions. The Secretary-General encourages non-signatory States to assess the impact of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on existing national legislation, with a view to ratifying the Convention and its Optional Protocol.

80. WHO work supporting trauma and disability care and rehabilitation, along with injury data collection, provides technical and normative guidance to countries and territories to improve survival and reduce disability for victims of all forms of injury, as well as accurately characterizing the injury burden. While this support is not targeted specifically at landmine injuries, the technical and normative guidance provided by WHO provides an example of how victim assistance can be integrated into national health and social welfare plans, programmes and frameworks.

D. Strategic objective 4: Assist the development of national institutions to manage the landmine/explosive remnants of war threat, and at the same time prepare for residual capacity in at least 15 countries

81. Particularly in programmes where UNDP and UNICEF provide technical support for Government-managed initiatives, the United Nations assists Governments to develop capacities that enable national mine action institutions to manage, coordinate and implement an appropriate response to the landmine and explosive remnants of war problem. In countries and territories with programmes managed by the United Nations Mine Action Service, the primary focus is on coordinating the implementation of mine action activities and to develop strategies for successful transition to national management and responsibility. The goal of all United Nations support is to ensure that all national mine action institutions can ultimately achieve mine action objectives with little to no international support through appropriately trained and equipped mine action capacities.

82. In Afghanistan, the United Nations Mine Action Service has worked since 2008, with the national Department of Mine Clearance to coordinate mine action activities, a major step towards nationalization of mine action in that country. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Mine Action Service has been supporting the development of a national structure, created in 2008, by providing training and coordinating mine action activities. The United Nations Mine Action Service has also played a role in developing a legal framework that governs national structures, working with the army, police and civil society to establish a residual response capacity and advocating that the Government take ownership of the landmine and explosive remnants of war legacy.

83. In Iraq, UNDP has been supporting the Iraqi mine action authority and the Government in revising its original strategic plan. In 2008 and 2009, UNDP provided training sessions and workshops on strategic planning and supported the creation of operational clearance capacities through the establishment of a specialized NGO in southern Iraq. Furthermore, both UNDP and UNICEF supported efforts to build managerial capacities in Iraq by strengthening existing institutions.

84. In Jordan, the National Mine Action Plan for 2005-2009 has received strong governmental and international support. The country has developed national capacities, including a National Plan, Impact Survey, Mine Action Standards, Quality Management Team, Victim Database and Mine-Risk Education Programme. The National Plan is being re-engineered to consider transition issues and conclusion of United Nations support. In Kosovo, the national mine action programme and the United Nations worked together to develop a multi-year strategic plan for 2008-2010 and the United Nations continues to assist national capacities that were established in 2002. The United Nations supports these national capacities by providing equipment and a training programme.

85. In Lebanon, UNDP supported the drafting of keystone mine action plans, including an end-state strategy for United Nations mine action support, long-term plans and annual plans, by providing training, technical advice and administrative assistance. Both the United Nations Mine Action Service and UNDP have worked to provide support in Lebanon for the development of national capacities. Since 2007, the United Nations Mine Action Service has supported a transitional strategy by contributing equipment and human resources to the Lebanon Mine Action Centre from the Mine Action and Coordination Centre — south Lebanon following its closure. In Mauritania, UNDP has worked with the national authority and provided assistance in the development of a national strategy and a national plan for mine action.

86. In Mozambique, the national mine action plan for 2008-2012 has been developed to guide activities in the country. UNDP provides assistance by ensuring comprehensiveness and coherence in key strategic documents and supports compliance with international requirements by providing technical expertise and funds aimed at strengthening capacities. In Nepal, where a national plan has yet to be devised, mine action activities have been coordinated and developed mainly by the United Nations Mine Action Team.

87. In the northern regions of Somalia, UNDP has worked closely with national authorities to support the development of mine action plans and to provide technical support. A strategic plan has also been developed in the Somali region of "Puntland". The regional authority is responsible for the overall mine action

programme and the clearance team handles mine clearance activities. In the Somali region of "Somaliland" mine action is also coordinated by the regional authority, and UNDP has provided training and expert support in developing the effectiveness of mine action work.

88. The United Nations began developing mine action capacity in south central Somalia in early 2008. Some progress has been made in surveying communities and providing mine-risk education to returnees. The security situation, however, remains tenuous, thereby impacting the ability to carry out operational activities. In Niger, in 2008, UNDP assisted the Government in creating a mine action working group within the National Commission for the Collection and Control of Illicit Weapons in order to support the Government in the planning of its mine action activities.

89. The United Nations has assisted the Sudan to build national capacity by providing training courses on management and technical expertise, and by helping national authorities to establish their headquarters and offices.

90. In Tajikistan, UNDP assists the national mine action authority to enhance the effectiveness of the management, coordination, monitoring and quality assurance of operations. In Thailand, UNDP supports the national capacity development project aimed at enhancing strategic planning and coordination and the Government has developed several operational capacities including training centres and mine action units.

91. In Uganda, where the mine action programme is nationally owned and implemented, UNDP has provided financial support and technical assistance including for the development of national mine action standards, and a draft policy that guides mine action activities and the establishment of a national victims' database.

92. The work of the United Nations in building national mine action capacity has seen considerable progress in the reporting period. Many national strategic plans have been established with the support and expertise of the United Nations Mine Action Team. United Nations support has also been invaluable in developing capacity in many States, providing the financial and technical support needed to strengthen national mine action structures. There are, however, continuing challenges that require action. The United Nations Mine Action Team stands ready and will continue to assist affected States upon request.

IV. United Nations mine action agenda: looking forward

93. The previous sections of the present report illustrate the measurable progress achieved in the implementation of the United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy for 2006-2010. As the United Nations Mine Action Team nears the completion of its current five-year strategy and considers new priorities and benchmarks for the United Nations Mine Action Strategy 2011-2015, the Secretary-General recognizes significant challenges that remain. The Second Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, to be held from 30 November to 4 December 2009 in Cartagena, Colombia, will produce a new Action Plan that will inform future United Nations assistance for the period 2011-2015. At Cartagena, the United Nations will report on the achievements to date and on lessons learned, and will outline priorities and challenges for the next five

years. The United Nations will take every opportunity to encourage States parties to maintain their support to mine action in accordance with international treaty obligations and ultimately end the suffering caused by landmines and explosive remnants of war. Maintaining adequate funding levels over the coming years for programmes and activities will be particularly important.

94. At the same time, additional challenges have emerged that require attention and may be subject to elaboration in the new United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy for 2011-2015. The United Nations is responsible for the mitigation of the risks posed to peace operations by landmines, explosive remnants of war and, increasingly, improvised explosive devices that have been abandoned, stockpiled or failed to function. In accordance with policy discussions on improvised explosive devices between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Field Support and the Department of Safety and Security, the United Nations Mine Action Service intends to develop further the capability to advise and assist peace operations in countering the threat and effects of these devices.

95. In addition, mine action organizations have been the primary responders to uncontrolled explosions in ammunition storage facilities. The need for providing technical assistance to States on the safe destruction of degraded and obsolete ammunition stockpiles and technical advice on safe ammunition storage and stockpile management appears to be increasing.

96. As the Department of Peacekeeping Operations focal point for the rights of persons with disabilities, the United Nations Mine Action Service is playing an active role within the United Nations Mine Action Team in developing an advocacy campaign on persons affected by landmines and explosive remnants of war. In consultation with OHCHR, UNHCR and UNICEF, the United Nations Mine Action Service will continue to expand the dissemination of the Disabilities Advocacy Toolkit to sensitize States not yet parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to its provisions.

97. The United Nations Mine Action Team, Member States and the mine action community at large must remain committed to the work that remains to realize the goals of existing international instruments and those about to enter into force, and ultimately to ending the suffering caused by landmines and explosive remnants of war, while responding to emerging threats. Therefore, the Secretary-General recommends a forward-looking agenda in which Member States:

(a) Remain coordinated and committed to the goal of ending the suffering caused by mines and explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions remnants, by abandoned ammunition and by improvised explosive devices through the consistent provision of necessary resources in particular to support the building and development and strengthening of national capacities in mine action;

(b) Ratify or accede to the legal framework for mine action: the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention; the Convention on Conventional Weapons Amended Protocol II and Protocol V; the Convention on Cluster Munitions; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol;

(c) That are parties to Protocol V, reach agreement on establishing standards for its effective implementation that best ensures the protection of civilian populations drawing on lessons learned from the implementation of other relevant treaties;

(d) Continue to support the development of a United Nations capacity for rapid deployment that will directly contribute to the protection of civilians and the efficient work of humanitarian operations in emergency and early recovery situations;

(e) Continue to reflect in United Nations resolutions the critical role of mine action to peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, including the efficient delivery of humanitarian assistance and the safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons;

(f) Continue to ensure that sufficient national and international resources are made available to mine action activities, including in support of sustainable development, in emergency, humanitarian and peace operations;

(g) Mainstream mine action into development plans to ensure that clearance activities are adequately resourced and aligned with broader development priorities and plans;

(h) Exploit the advantage of sophisticated mechanical equipment available today and increase the mechanization of mine and explosive remnants of war clearance, where appropriate;

(i) Acknowledge the potential role of the United Nations Mine Action Service, within the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in relation to appropriate advice and assistance to peace operations in regard to countering the effects of improvised explosive devices and other explosive remnants of war in cooperation with other units of the Office;

(j) Support all United Nations Mine Action Team members in the successful implementation of the United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy 2006-2010 and in the development of a future Mine Action Strategy 2011-2015;

And in concert with the broader mine action community:

(k) Increase their efforts to promote compliance with the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Conventional Weapons Amended Protocol II and Protocol V, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol;

(l) Expand resources and increase programming for all persons with disabilities, including mine and explosive remnants of war survivors, particularly in the health, social welfare, education and employment sectors, guided by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;

(m) Prevent harm to civilians, particularly children, by providing effective warnings, risk education and other preventive measures to protect their populations from the direct and indirect effects of landmines and explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions, and improvised explosive devices;

(n) Take concrete steps to ensure that mine action programmes have an equal impact on women, men, boys and girls and that they all enjoy equal access, and have an equal decision-making role in mine action in their respective communities, and monitor the extent and effectiveness of those efforts;

(o) Continue to develop and implement methodologies for the systematic assessment of the impact of mine action activities on all members of beneficiary communities in order to secure the most effective operational tasking and use of released land.

United Nations A/64/288

General Assembly

Distr.: General
25 August 2009

Original: English

Sixty-fourth session
Agenda items 126 and 137 of the provisional agenda*

Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B, 54/244 and 59/272

Activities of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee for the period from 1 August 2008 to 31 July 2009

Report of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee

Summary

The present report covers the period from 1 August 2008 to 31 July 2009. The Independent Audit Advisory Committee held four sessions during that period, all of which were presided over by David M. Walker (United States of America). Mr. Walker and Vijayendra Nath Kaul (India) were re-elected Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, respectively, for 2009.

Section II of the report contains an overview of the activities of the Committee, the status of its recommendations and its plans for 2010. Section III presents the detailed comments of the Committee.

Included as an annex to the report is the advice of the Committee on the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the audit activities and other oversight functions of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, submitted for consideration by the General Assembly in its review of the functions and reporting procedures of that Office.

* A/64/150.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, by resolution 60/248 of 23 December 2005, established the Independent Audit Advisory Committee as a subsidiary body to serve in an expert advisory capacity and to assist it in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities. In accordance with its terms of reference (see General Assembly resolution 61/275, annex), the Committee is authorized to hold up to four sessions per year. The Committee has held seven sessions since its inception in January 2008.

2. In accordance with its terms of reference, the Independent Audit Advisory Committee submits an annual report to the General Assembly, containing a summary of its activities and related advice. The first annual report of the Committee (A/63/328) was submitted for the period from 1 January to 31 July 2008. The present, second annual report covers the period from 1 August 2008 to 31 July 2009.

3. Annexed to the report are the observations, comments and recommendations of the Committee on the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the oversight activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). The Committee decided to present these separately as an annex to facilitate reference to the report during the review by the General Assembly at its 64th session of the functions and reporting procedures of OIOS.

II. Activities of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee

A. Overview of the sessions of the Committee

4. During the reporting period, the Independent Audit Advisory Committee held four sessions, from 1 to 3 December 2008 (fourth session), 20 to 22 February (fifth session), 13 to 15 April 2009 (sixth session) and 30 June to 2 July 2009 (seventh session). All of the sessions were held at United Nations Headquarters.

5. The Committee functions under its adopted rules of procedure, as contained in the annex to its first annual report A/63/328. To date, all members of the Committee have a 100 per cent attendance rate at its sessions. All decisions of the Committee have been unanimous, however, its rules of procedure do make provision for members to record their dissent with decisions taken by the majority.

6. At its fourth session in December 2008, the members re-elected David M. Walker (United States of America) and Vijayendra N. Kaul (India) as Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, respectively, for 2009. On 18 December 2008, the Committee launched the English language version of its website and will complete the implementation of the website in the other official languages of the United Nations by August 2009, one month later than planned.

7. The Independent Audit Advisory Committee has submitted six reports to the General Assembly, three of which have been submitted in the current reporting period. These include its reports to the General Assembly, through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, on the budget for OIOS under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010 (A/63/703) and the proposed programme budget of OIOS for

the biennium 2010-2011 (A/64/86). The Committee also submitted a report to the General Assembly on vacant posts in OIOS (A/63/737).

B. Status of the recommendations of the Committee

8. The Committee has made 29 recommendations in its reports. Two of the 29 recommendations were made in its report on the proposed programme budget of OIOS for the biennium 2010-2011 (A/64/86), which will be considered by the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. Of the remaining 27 recommendations, 13 have been implemented, another 13 are in the process of being implemented and 1 was not commented on by the General Assembly.

9. Although it meets only four times a year for two or three days at each session, the Committee has made significant achievements to date, particularly in relation to the operations of OIOS. The Committee follows up on the implementation of its recommendations as a standard agenda item at each session and looks forward to seeing their full effect in the actions taken by OIOS and management. Some of the significant recommendations that the Committee has made relate to:

(a) Improving cooperation between OIOS and the Board of Auditors and the Joint Inspection Unit by means of an annual joint planning session with the Board and the Unit to ensure that the workplans of these oversight bodies are taken in consideration before OIOS workplans are finalized;

(b) The need for modification of the risk-based approach of OIOS to work planning for internal audit, involving revision of the OIOS risk assessment framework to include the effect of controls that management has put in place in the assessment of residual risk. It is important to note that these measures are required since management is yet to implement its enterprise risk management and internal control framework. In addition, the Committee recommended that the OIOS Investigations Division should prepare workplans addressing its existing investigation caseload;

(c) The reorganization of the OIOS Investigations Division using a hub and spoke structure in a phased manner that retains some investigative capacity at high-risk missions;

(d) The need for OIOS to focus on the value it delivers to the Organization as a return of the Organization's investment in internal oversight. Suitable metrics and performance indicators should be developed for this purpose;

(e) The need for a definition of key oversight terms, such as savings, loss and damages, which should be undertaken by OIOS in consultation with the Office of Legal Affairs and the Department of Management. The Committee will address how the term "independence" should be applied to OIOS;

(f) The immediate and urgent action required to fill vacant posts in OIOS, particularly at the senior management levels and especially that of Director of the Investigations Division, in order to ensure that the effectiveness and efficiency of OIOS in the performance of its mandated functions is not compromised.

C. Overview of the plans of the Committee for 2010

10. The Committee undertook its responsibilities, as set out in its terms of reference, in accordance with the scheduling of the sessions of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the General Assembly. The Committee will continue to schedule its sessions and activities to ensure that interaction with intergovernmental bodies is coordinated and that the availability of its reports is timely. In a preliminary review of its workplan, the Committee has identified several key areas which will be the main focus at each of its four sessions in 2010 (see table).

Workplan of the Committee for 2010

Sessions	*Key focus area*	*Intergovernmental consideration of the report of the Committee*
Ninth	Proposed budget for OIOS under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2010 to 31 July 2011	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, fourth quarter 2010
	Enterprise risk management and internal control framework	General Assembly
Tenth	Status of implementation of oversight bodies recommendations	
	Management of risks and internal controls	
Eleventh	Operational implications of issues and trends in financial statements and reports of the Board of Auditors	General Assembly, main part of the sixty-fifth session
	Cooperation among United Nations oversight bodies	
	Review of the terms of reference of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee	
	Preparation of the annual report of the Committee	
Twelfth	Results of OIOS risk assessment	
	Workplans of OIOS for 2011	

11. In the discussion on planning for 2010, the Committee identified the following relevant events:

(a) Review by the General Assembly of the terms of reference of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee at its sixty-fifth session (General Assembly resolution 61/275);

(b) The end of the term of appointment of three of the five Committee members, whose three-year term expires in December 2010;

(c) The expiration of the term of appointment of the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services on 15 July 2010.

12. The Independent Audit Advisory Committee may make proposals to the General Assembly for amendments to its terms of reference, based on its operational experience over the past three years. These proposals will be contained in the annual report of the Committee, to be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session.

III. Detailed comments of the Committee

A. Status of the recommendations of United Nations oversight bodies

13. At its seventh session, the Committee reviewed the status of implementation by management of the recommendations of United Nations oversight bodies. The Committee noted the concern raised by the Board of Auditors in its report on the implementation of its recommendations relating to the biennium 2006-2007 as at 31 March 2009 (A/64/98). The Board reported an overall implementation rate of 27 per cent for the recommendations made in its report on the United Nations accounts for the biennium 2006-2007. The Department of Management reported to the Committee that a large number of the Board's recommendations were planned for full implementation during the second half of 2009 and that the implementation rate would change substantially by the end of the year.

14. According to the report of the Board of Auditors on United Nations peacekeeping operations for the 12-month period from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008 (A/63/5 (Vol. II), chap. II), the rate of implementation of the recommendations made for 2006-2007 in respect of peacekeeping operations was 32 per cent. The Board noted a decrease in the implementation rate compared to the previous year. The Department of Management acknowledged the low implementation rate and reported to the Committee that the Management Committee, under the chairmanship of the Deputy Secretary-General, was making a concerted effort to stress to programme managers the need to implement expeditiously all of the recommendations of oversight bodies and would continue to monitor closely their implementation. The Management Committee follows up on a quarterly basis: (a) recommendations that OIOS reports to be of most concern; (b) the main recommendations of the Board of Auditors that have been outstanding for more than two years; and (c) all critical recommendations of OIOS that are more than three years old and not yet fully implemented.

15. In addition, as indicated in the first annual report of the Committee (A/63/328), the implementation of oversight recommendations is a performance indicator in the compact between the Secretary-General and his senior managers. The Management Performance Board reviews the performance of senior managers through that compact.

16. The Department of Management drew the attention of the Committee to the high number of recommendations issued by OIOS, which average approximately 2,[illegible]0 per year. Of the 2,028 recommendations made by OIOS in 2008, the

Department of Management reported that 49 per cent had been implemented and that the implementation rate of recommendations issued by OIOS three and four years ago was 89 per cent and 95 per cent, respectively.

17. The Committee acknowledges the positive trend in the implementation of OIOS recommendations. Notwithstanding this trend, management has expressed its concern to the Committee regarding the increasing number of recommendations issued by OIOS. While the Committee does not make any judgement in respect of the number of recommendations issued by OIOS, the concern expressed by management has been noted for follow-up with OIOS. OIOS has indicated that efforts have been made to ensure that recommendations are relevant and add value, and that it does not use the number of recommendations as a performance indicator. The Committee makes additional comments regarding the number of recommendations issued by OIOS in the annex to the present report.

B. Workplan and budget of the Office of Internal Oversight Services for 2009

18. The responsibilities of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee with respect to OIOS are set out in its terms of reference and include the examination by the Committee of the workplans of OIOS, taking into account the workplans of the other oversight bodies, and advising the General Assembly thereon.

19. The Committee reported its observations and recommendations in regard to OIOS workplans in its reports on the budget for OIOS under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010 (A/63/703) and the proposed programme budget for OIOS for the biennium 2010-2011 (A/64/86). In respect of the former report, the General Assembly agreed with the recommendations made in relation to OIOS work planning and, by resolution 63/287, requested the Secretary-General to entrust OIOS to implement them. The latter report of the Committee is scheduled for consideration by the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session.

20. The Committee recalls its recommendations made in the above-mentioned reports and reiterates that management has the primary responsibility for assessing and managing organizational and related risks. As stated in its report on the proposed programme budget for OIOS for the biennium 2010-2011 (A/64/86, para. 11), the Committee and OIOS agreed that an assessment of inherent risks only would provide an overly conservative estimate of the level of risks in an organization, and while that approach might be acceptable for prioritizing the use of existing resources, it would not be appropriate or practical as a basis for proposing the total level of resource requirements. The Committee therefore made no comment on the proposed programme budget for OIOS subprogramme 1, internal audit, for the biennium 2010-2011. In the absence of a management initiative to assess risks, the Committee notes that the task of OIOS of preparing a risk register taking into account the effect of internal controls will be resource intensive and will take a considerable time to complete. The Committee will continue to support and advise OIOS in this process.

21. The workplans of an internal audit entity are typically based on an assessment of risk and the exposure of the organization to those risks. Internal audit entities use risk assessments to make decisions about the level of resources required to address a

workplan and the priority that will be assigned to the internal audits in the plan. Risk models and frameworks are commonly used to assist the internal audit entity in developing their workplans. Most risk models use a combination of risk factors, such as impact, likelihood, materiality, asset liquidity, management competence, degree of change or stability, timing and results of most recent audit engagement, complexity, and quality of and adherence to applicable internal controls.

C. Risk management and internal control framework

22. Subparagraphs 2 (f) and (g) of the terms of reference of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee specifically mandate the Committee with the responsibility to advise the Assembly on the quality and overall effectiveness of risk management procedures and on deficiencies in the internal control framework of the United Nations.

23. The Committee noted that the General Assembly, in its resolution 63/276, had decided not to endorse the proposed accountability framework of the Secretary-General and had requested a comprehensive report on, inter alia, a proposed detailed plan and road map for the implementation of the enterprise risk management and internal control framework. The Independent Audit Advisory Committee will prepare its comments and advice to the General Assembly once that report has been completed and made available to the Committee.

D. Cooperation and access

24. The Independent Audit Advisory Committee is pleased to report that it has received the full cooperation of the Board of Auditors, OIOS and the senior management of the United Nations Secretariat, including the Department of Management, in discharging its responsibilities. The Committee was also given appropriate access to the staff, documents and information it needed to undertake its work.

(*Signed*) David M. **Walker**
Chairman, Independent Audit Advisory Committee

(*Signed*) Vijayendra N. **Kaul**
Vice-Chairman, Independent Audit Advisory Committee

(*Signed*) Vadim V. **Dubinkin**
Member, Independent Audit Advisory Committee

(*Signed*) John F. S. **Muwanga**
Member, Independent Audit Advisory Committee

(*Signed*) Adrian P. **Strachan**
Member, Independent Audit Advisory Committee

Annex

Observations, comments and recommendations of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee on the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the audit activities and other oversight functions of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

I. Background

1. Since establishing the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) at its forty-eighth session, the General Assembly has taken successive decisions to review the functions and reporting procedures of the Office every five years. Subsequent to the forty-eighth session, the review of those functions and procedures was placed on the agenda of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session (1999) and at its fifty-ninth (2004) when, by resolution 59/272, the Assembly decided to evaluate and review the functions and reporting procedures of OIOS at the present, sixty-fourth session.

2. The Independent Audit Advisory Committee sought direction from the General Assembly as to the role the Assembly might require the Committee to play in the forthcoming review of OIOS (see A/63/328, para. 17). In response, the General Assembly, in resolution 63/265, recalled that one of the responsibilities of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee, according to its terms of reference, was to advise the General Assembly on the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the audit activities and other oversight functions of OIOS. The Committee accepted this as a mandate from the General Assembly to provide advice on the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the audit activities and other oversight functions of OIOS as input for the review by the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session.

II. Data collection and review process of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee

3. The Committee developed a plan to collect relevant data for analysis and prepare its input to the General Assembly. Two approaches were employed in the Committee's data-gathering process: a survey questionnaire and supplementary structured interviews with selected senior managers.

4. The Committee conducted a survey of 191 judgmentally sampled senior United Nations staff members (D-1 level and above) from entities that are subject to OIOS oversight. These included departments of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna, the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Environment Programme.

5. The survey questionnaire which was distributed in March 2009, included questions relating to the performance of OIOS, the quality and professionalism of its outputs and staff, the impact of its oversight functions on programmes and the

overall level of satisfaction with its work. The survey was administered electronically and the individual responses are confidential. The response rate to the survey was 45 per cent, that is, 87 responses were received to the 191 questionnaires sent out. This response rate is considered reasonable in the light of anecdotal information that the response rate for surveys in the United Nations Secretariat are typically in the 25-30 per cent range. In the Committee's view, however, while the response data were useful, the response rate was not adequate to draw statistically reliable conclusions about the sample population as a whole.

6. The Committee supplemented the survey information by conducting 19 structured interviews with senior managers. These included selected Under-Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-General, and heads of funds and programmes for which OIOS has internal oversight responsibility. The interviews were conducted in New York by the Chairperson of the Committee, David M. Walker, in Geneva and Vienna by the Vice-Chairperson, Vijayendra N. Kaul, and in Nairobi by John F. S. Muwanga.

7. The Committee wishes to take this opportunity to express its thanks to all of the respondents to the survey and to the senior managers for taking time from their busy schedules to meet with the respective Committee members and respond to questions. The information gathered proved useful to the work of the Committee and, in many respects, served to corroborate its views.

III. Observations, comments and recommendations

8. Set out below are the observations, comments and recommendations of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee, based on the information gathered from the responses to the survey questionnaire, supplemented by interviews with senior management, and the observations of members of the Committee over the past 18 months.

9. The Committee recognizes the precedence of all legislative decisions contained in General Assembly resolutions concerning OIOS. The observations, comments and recommendations contained in the present report are therefore made within the context of those resolutions, in particular General Assembly resolution 48/218 B, by which it established OIOS to assist the Secretary-General in fulfilling his internal oversight responsibilities in respect of the resources and staff of the Organization through the exercise of the functions of monitoring, internal audit, inspection and evaluation and investigation, and General Assembly resolutions 54/244 and 59/272.

10. The Committee has always been diligent in ensuring that its activities remain strictly within the scope of its terms of reference (see General Assembly resolution 61/275, annex). In this respect, the observations, comments and recommendations in the present report focus on the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the oversight functions of OIOS, in conformity with paragraph 2 (e) of the terms of reference of the Committee. The report presents only the most significant issues, with a particular focus on the issues that are relevant to the review by the General Assembly of OIOS functions and reporting. Information on issues related to OIOS internal processes and OIOS management will be discussed and presented to OIOS for information and action at the eighth session of the Committee in December 2009.

A. Effectiveness of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

11. The review of the effectiveness of OIOS focused on establishing the extent to which the Office "is doing the right things". The survey response recorded that 62 per cent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that OIOS fulfilled its mandate to assist the Secretary-General in his internal oversight responsibilities in respect of the resources and staff of the Organization. The same percentage of respondents (62 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that OIOS was helping to strengthen the United Nations.

12. In the interviews with senior managers, the following emerged as significant issues in relation to the effectiveness of OIOS:

(a) Several managers stated that they did not clearly understand the role of OIOS or did not perceive OIOS as an internal oversight capacity that could assist management by conducting reviews of areas of concern proactively identified by management. The perception of managers was that the Office's view of its independence appeared to position it as more of an external auditor than an internal auditor;

(b) A majority of the senior managers interviewed (16 of 19) indicated that they saw little or no correlation between the OIOS workplan and their programme priorities, particularly as regards internal audit;

(c) Managers expressed dissatisfaction with the recording of their comments by OIOS in the final internal audit reports.

13. The issue of OIOS independence raised by management was corroborated by the Committee's observation that, in addition to the need for a definition of key oversight terms, a definition of the term "independence" in the context of internal oversight at the United Nations should be central to clarifying the role and responsibilities of OIOS. The Committee is of the view that, while other oversight terms should be defined by OIOS in consultation with the Department of Management and the Office of Legal Affairs, as previously recommended by the Committee (A/63/703, para. 22), the Committee itself is best placed to provide advice on the definition of the term independence.

1. Independence of internal oversight

14. Independence and objectivity are vital in ensuring that stakeholders view the audit work performed, and its results, as credible, factual and unbiased. OIOS, like most internal oversight bodies, has a unique position in the Organization in that internal oversight staff are employed by the Organization but are expected to report on the conduct of its management. This relationship has an innate tension since the independence of the internal oversight functions from those of management is necessary for objective evaluation of management's actions.

15. In establishing OIOS, the General Assembly decided that the Office should exercise operational independence under the authority of the Secretary-General in the conduct of its duties (resolution 48/218 B, para. 5 (a)). It subsequently clarified this decision by emphasizing that the operational independence of OIOS was related to the performance of its internal oversight functions (resolution 54/244, para. 18).

16. According to the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions, internal audit services necessarily are subordinate to the head of the department within which they have been established but should nevertheless be functionally and organizationally independent as far as possible within their respective constitutional framework.[a]

17. According to the globally accepted definition developed by the Institute of Internal Auditors, internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organization's operations, which helps an organization to accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.

18. Standard 1110 of the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing of the Institute of Internal Auditors, concerning organizational independence, states that the chief audit executive must report to a level within the organization that allows the internal audit activity to fulfil its responsibilities, and that the chief audit executive must confirm to the board, at least annually, the organizational independence of the internal audit activity. It also states that independence for internal oversight is facilitated by the head of the internal oversight reporting functionally to the board and administratively to the organization's chief executive officer.

19. **Based on the General Assembly resolutions and the standards developed by the Institute of Internal Auditors and the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions, the Independent Audit Advisory Committee proposes that the role and operational independence of OIOS be defined as follows:**

> **The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) is an internal audit, evaluation, inspection and investigations unit within the United Nations. As such, OIOS should seek a constructive working relationship with management. It should consult with management in determining its concerns and the areas in need of attention prior to establishing any final engagement plans. OIOS should also comply with all United Nations regulations, rules, policies and procedures relating to personnel, ethics, contracting and other administrative matters, provided that they are consistent with the guidance on operational independence noted below. With regard to operational independence, OIOS should have an appropriate degree of real and perceived independence from the management of the United Nations and funds and programmes for which it provides oversight services. Operational independence includes, inter alia, the ability of OIOS to: determine its final workplans and the content of its final reports; make requests for adequate resources to undertake its work; conduct its work with the cooperation of management and all applicable parties, free from intervention; select staff for the Office; and communicate directly to the General Assembly and the Secretary-General in connection with matters of critical importance to the United Nations and/or the Office.**

[a] See *Lima Declaration of Guidelines on Auditing Precepts*, adopted by the Ninth Congress of the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions, Lima, 17-26 October 1977, chap. I, sect. 3, para. 2.

20. In accordance with the legislative decisions of the General Assembly (as stated in resolutions 48/218 B, 54/244 and 59/272), OIOS achieves its independence in the following ways:

(a) The head of OIOS, the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, is appointed by the Secretary-General following consultations with Member States approved by the General Assembly, and serves one fixed term of five years without the possibility of renewal. The removal of the Under-Secretary-General by the Secretary-General can only be for cause and with the approval of the General Assembly;

(b) *Work planning*. In accordance with paragraph 5 (a) of resolution 48/218 B, OIOS has the authority to initiate, carry out and report on any action which it considers necessary to fulfil its responsibilities with regard to monitoring, internal audit, inspection and evaluation and investigations. The Independent Audit Advisory Committee considers that, for OIOS to add value to the Organization, OIOS must consult with management on organizational priorities and risks and take into account the workplans of other oversight bodies at an early stage prior to preparing its own preliminary workplan. OIOS should give serious consideration to the comments, concerns and suggestions expressed by management. OIOS operational independence is achieved by the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services having the authority to decide on the final workplan of the Office;

(c) *Unrestricted access*. The General Assembly, in resolution 48/218 B, paragraph 6, requested the Secretary-General to ensure that OIOS has procedures in place that provide for direct confidential access of staff members to the Office and for protection against repercussions, for the purposes of suggesting improvements for programme delivery and reporting perceived cases of misconduct. The General Assembly, in resolution 59/272, paragraph 3, decided that reports of OIOS shall be submitted directly to the General Assembly;

(d) *Personnel arrangements*. The General Assembly, in resolution 54/244, paragraph 19, decided that the recruitment and promotion of staff of OIOS shall be in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and Staff Regulations and Rules of the Organization, taking into account Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter. The Independent Audit Advisory Committee adds that OIOS must comply with the applicable United Nations financial and human resources regulations and rules, as well as with the specific policies, delegated authorities and personnel arrangements that exist for OIOS. In the opinion of the Committee, it is necessary for the operational independence of OIOS that the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services has the authority to select OIOS staff for appointment and promotion;

(e) *Adequate resources*. The General Assembly, in resolution 48/218 B, paragraph 9, decided that the programme budget proposals of OIOS shall be submitted by it to the Secretary-General who, with due regard for the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 41/213 and for the necessity of providing adequate resources for the functioning of the Office to be effective, shall submit proposals to the General Assembly. Of importance in this regard is the responsibility of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee to review the

proposed budget of OIOS, taking into account its workplans, and to advise the General Assembly accordingly. This mechanism is critical for the independence of OIOS and for ensuring transparency in its proposed budget requests.

21. The Committee considers that, in order to understand the definition of independence, it is essential also to understand what constitutes impairment to independence. According to the interpretation by the Institute of Internal Auditors of standard 1130, on impairment to independence or objectivity, impairment to organizational independence and individual objectivity may include, but is not limited to, personal conflict of interest, scope limitations, restrictions on access to records, personnel and properties, and resource limitations, such as funding. **In the context of the United Nations, impairment to OIOS independence will include any restriction to its ability to operate in accordance with its mandate from the General Assembly, including but not limited to, any restriction to its ability to determine its final workplans and the content of its final reports; make requests for adequate resources to undertake its workplans; conduct its work with the cooperation of management and all applicable parties, free from intervention; select staff for the Office; and communicate directly to the General Assembly and the Secretary-General in connection with matters of critical importance to the United Nations and/or the Office.**

22. An effective mechanism in improving the accountability of both management and the oversight activity is the requirement of an annual confirmation by the head of internal oversight to the governing board (or its designate) that the oversight activity was independent during the reporting period and, if not, then specific instances of impairment should be disclosed. **The Committee advises the General Assembly to consider instituting a requirement for the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services to provide assurance to the Assembly in the annual report of OIOS that the Office was independent during the reporting period and, if not, disclose the specific details of impairment.**

23. The Committee concludes that, in regard to its independence, functions and reporting, OIOS may not be directly comparable to the traditional model of internal oversight entity found in many of the large private sector corporations. Indeed, the independence accorded by the General Assembly positions OIOS as a hybrid entity somewhat between internal and external oversight functions, and in some respects affords a higher level of independence than traditional internal oversight entities. Therefore, the Committee considers that there is a critical need for a detailed description of the import of the General Assembly resolutions relating to OIOS, as well as the specific policies and definition terms relating to OIOS and its functions, including the definition of OIOS independence, in order to provide clarification of the status of the Office for all stakeholders.

24. **The Independent Audit Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly consider requesting the Secretary-General to direct OIOS to prepare an internal oversight charter which would serve as the terms of reference of the Office, encompass all elements of the relevant decisions of the General Assembly and contain a detailed description of the mandate, authority, functions, accountability and reporting procedures of the Office and its relationship to the General Assembly (including the relationship with the Independent Audit Advisory Committee), the Secretary-General, management and other oversight bodies. The internal oversight charter should be updated to**

include all subsequent General Assembly decisions concerning OIOS. The Independent Audit Advisory Committee could provide advice to the General Assembly regarding the completeness of the internal oversight charter in reflecting the legislative decisions of the Assembly.

2. Consultation with management in the finalization of the internal audit workplan of the Office

25. In relation to the effectiveness of OIOS, 16 of the 19 senior managers interviewed stated that the workplan of OIOS, particularly as regards internal audit, had little or no correlation with their programme priorities. Managers were of the view that the OIOS work planning process should be more consultative in order to take into consideration the concerns and priorities of management.

26. Typically, the internal audit entity prepares its workplans based on its audit universe (i.e., the areas of the organization that fall within the scope of the entity), input from senior management and the board, and an assessment of the risk and exposures affecting the organization. The internal audit entity then prioritizes the use of audit resources using such risk factors as impact, likelihood, materiality, asset liquidity, management competence, degree of change or stability, timing and results of most recent audit engagement, complexity, and quality of and adherence to internal controls.

27. **Although programme managers and staff participate in the OIOS risk assessment workshops, the Independent Audit Advisory Committee considers that OIOS could add more value by including in the process a step to solicit input from applicable programme managers prior to as well as after preparing a draft audit workplan in order to give full consideration to the programme's priorities before the plan is finalized.**

3. Recording of comments of management in the final internal audit report

28. Of the 19 senior managers interviewed, 17 indicated varying degrees of dissatisfaction with the recording of the comments of management in the final OIOS reports. The OIOS process for finalizing its internal audit reports appears to be the same as in most organizations: at the end of the assignment, managers participate in an exit conference during which preliminary findings and recommendations are discussed; OIOS then prepares a draft report which is submitted to the relevant manager for comments and the report is then finalized, with the response of management recorded therein. The managers stated that their comments were often selectively recorded in the report or paraphrased in a manner that did not accurately present their response. The Independent Audit Advisory Committee considers that the increased sensitivity of managers is mainly due to the fact that, under the terms of General Assembly resolution 59/272, original versions of OIOS reports not submitted to the General Assembly are made available to Member States, upon request.

29. In internal oversight practice generally, it is not routine that a governing body has access to internal oversight reports in their original form. Therefore, in the context of the United Nations, some amendment to the process for finalizing internal oversight reports may be required to ensure that the comments of management are appropriately reflected in the final reports. **The Independent Audit Advisory Committee recommends that, in OIOS reports, the complete**

response of management be included as an annex. Programme managers should ensure that their responses are concise and directed at the issues in the report. OIOS would then consider and respond to comments of management as it deems appropriate.

30. In its information-gathering efforts, the Independent Audit Advisory Committee elicited several comments from senior managers on other issues that also have implications for OIOS effectiveness. These issues, which will be communicated directly to OIOS for its analysis and action, relate to the quality of OIOS reports and staff, and the relationship between OIOS and management.

B. Efficiency of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

31. The Committee's approach to reviewing OIOS efficiency was to establish the extent to which OIOS makes best use of its resources and conducts its functions in a timely manner. The significant issues that emerged from the interviews with senior managers are as follows:

(a) Reports of OIOS take too long to be finalized;

(b) The high number of recommendations issued and the repetitive nature of certain systemic recommendations, which result in an increasing number of recommendations for management to monitor and follow-up;

(c) The high vacancy rates within OIOS, which have an adverse effect on completion of the internal audit workplan.

1. Finalization of reports of the Office

32. Delays in the issuance of the final reports of OIOS were mentioned in several interviews with senior managers. The Committee noted that this appeared to be a more significant issue for managers located in Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna than it was for managers at United Nations Headquarters. This may be owing to the centralized structure of OIOS, where reports are finalized at OIOS headquarters in New York. In response to a survey question on the timespan between the start of an assignment and the issuance of the final report, 41 per cent of the respondents indicated that the timespan was reasonable, 32 per cent disagreed and 27 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed, or had no opinion.

33. The Independent Audit Advisory Committee considers it important that reports be finalized in a timely manner as the value of oversight work diminishes when reports take too long to complete. **The Committee will add the timeliness of reports as an issue to be followed up with OIOS during its quarterly sessions.**

2. Number of recommendations issued

34. The Office of Internal Oversight Services issued 2,041 recommendations in 2007 and 2,028 recommendations in 2008. While managers did not appear to question the reporting of critical recommendations that relate to high-risk areas, they did take issue with the inclusion of recommendations that were of low risk and those that were repetitions of recommendations pertaining to certain systemic findings. The cumulative effect of recording low-risk and repetitive recommendations adds an administrative burden on departments when they have to report periodically to

OIOS and the Management Committee on the status of implementation of recommendations.

35. **The Committee has noted the concerns of management and, in this respect, considers that the focus for both OIOS and management should be on the quality of recommendations and the value added, rather than the quantity of recommendations. Without making any judgement in regard to the number of recommendations, the Committee will monitor the situation and provide advice to OIOS to ensure that, where possible, recommendations that relate to systemic findings are not repeated in audits of organizational entities.**

3. Vacant posts in the Office

36. The Committee reported the high number of vacancies in OIOS to the General Assembly in February 2009 (A/63/737), raising the concern that the high number of vacant posts, in particular at the senior management levels, would have an adverse effect on the capacity and ability of the Office to accomplish its programme of work. In the interviews with senior managers, this emerged as a critical issue for three programmes, all of which provide extrabudgetary funding to OIOS for internal oversight services. The managers had expressed their dissatisfaction to OIOS and, at the time of the interviews, progress was being made in resolving the issues in all three programmes.

37. In its report on the United Nations peacekeeping operations accounts and operations for the financial period ended 30 June 2008 (A/63/5 (Vol. II), chap. II), the Board of Auditors reported that a significant number of audits planned by OIOS resident auditors in that period had not been undertaken or completed. According to the Board, only 32 per cent of the 201 audits planned for 2007 had been started and completed as at 31 December 2007. The Board attributed the delay in the completion of the audit plan to the high vacancy rate of 36 per cent for resident auditors. OIOS agreed with the findings of the Board, and explained that there had been an error in its planning assumptions which had overstated the number of days available per auditor.

38. The General Assembly, in resolution 63/287, took note of the observations and recommendations of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee contained in its report on vacant posts in OIOS and requested the Secretary-General to fill the vacancies in the Office, in accordance with the existing relevant provisions governing recruitment in the United Nations and the provisions of the resolution. By resolution 63/246 B, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendation of the Board of Auditors that the organization expedite the filling of all resident auditor posts to ensure the effective internal audit coverage of all missions.

39. According to the most recent information available to the Committee, the overall vacancy rate in OIOS is 22 per cent, which is an improvement on the 27 per cent vacancy rate reported by the Committee at the end of February 2009. All three posts at the Director level have not yet been filled; a recommendation concerning the Director of the Investigations Division has been submitted for approval by the Secretary-General and candidates for the Director of the Internal Audit Division and the Director of the Inspection and Evaluation Division are still under consideration. **The Independent Audit Advisory Committee will continue to monitor the implementation by OIOS of the recommendations relating to the filling of vacancies.**

C. Impact of the functions of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

40. A significant issue arising from the interviews of senior managers relates to the impact that the availability of OIOS reports to Member States is having on the relationship between OIOS and management. It is accepted that, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 59/272, the Secretary-General must ensure that original versions of the reports of OIOS not submitted to the General Assembly are, upon request, made available to any Member State. The effect of providing the reports to Member States is that some programme managers state that they are now reluctant to consult OIOS for advice or proactively request reviews in areas of concern to them since the report would be subject to release to Member States and, as has occurred under current practice, posted on the Internet.

41. In regard to the practices followed in other organizations, the Committee has met with a broad range of internal oversight experts during the course of its seven sessions, namely, several heads of oversight from organizations within and outside the United Nations system, including United Nations funds and programmes, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and a representative of the Institute of Internal Auditors. In relation to the disclosure of internal oversight reports, the Committee noted that the practices in these organizations varied. In the case of the United Nations funds and programmes, the practice was to invite the members of the governing board to review the requested reports on site and discuss the report with the internal oversight office and management without providing copies. The Committee also noted that in some international private and public sector organizations, the internal oversight entities provide to the governing boards an annual or semi-annual report on all of their activities, containing a summary of the main findings and recommendations of each of the reports issued. The summaries are usually published and are accessible to the public.

42. **The Independent Audit Advisory Committee recognizes and supports the primacy of the intent of the General Assembly in resolution 59/272 to promote transparency and facilitate the access of Member States to internal oversight reports. However, the Committee advises the General Assembly that it may be timely for it to give consideration to how such reports are made available in the light of their further dissemination on the Internet, once copies are provided to Member States. The Committee considers that any revision to the current practice should not diminish the transparency or restrict disclosure of the details of internal oversight reports in which Member States may have an interest.**

43. **Further, the Committee recommends that the Secretary-General, in coordination with the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, formalize the protocol for making reports available to Member States, taking into account existing General Assembly resolutions and any of its subsequent decisions. This protocol should be incorporated into the internal oversight charter (see para. 25 above) and should provide instructions on the process for requesting reports and clarify when reports of each OIOS function are considered final and available to Member States. The protocol should also include an explanation of the circumstances under which the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services may, in terms of General Assembly resolution 59/272, exercise discretion in modifying or withholding such reports.**

D. Conclusion

44. The principles contained in the General Assembly resolutions relating to OIOS are relevant and consistent with best practices in internal oversight. However, in relation to making internal oversight reports available to Member States, the implementation of the relevant General Assembly resolution may need to be reviewed and/or revised.

45. The Committee recognizes that the inherent nature of an oversight function can place internal oversight and management personnel in a challenging relationship which requires a concerted and constructive effort from both sides in order to enable OIOS to maximize its effectiveness, efficiency and impact on the work of the Organization. An internal oversight charter, including the definition of OIOS independence proposed by the Committee (see sect. A.1 above), will provide clarity for all stakeholders regarding the role of OIOS in the United Nations and will be the foundation for improvements in the partnership between oversight and management. In the opinion of the Committee, OIOS appears to be making progress with regard to the quality of work and adherence to international standards, but further effort is required to ensure that its risk-based work planning processes include input from management on programme priorities and the internal controls in place, that reports are issued in a timely manner with attention paid to the quality of recommendations and that vacancies are expeditiously filled.

46. The Independent Audit Advisory Committee presents the above observations, comments and recommendations for the consideration of the General Assembly in its evaluation and review of the functions and reporting procedures of the Office of Internal Oversight Services.